

CHRISTIAN FRIEND VOLUME 2

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Christian Friend Volume 2, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

46 Chapters

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Christian Friend Volume 2

In Everything Give Thanks

The apostle sums up in this chapter, and shows that all through man's history, no matter who had obtained a "good report," it was by faith. This was specially a trial for the Hebrews. Their very religion was one of sight. They had a system to walk by—a visible temple, sacrifices, priesthood, and the like. Messiah, they expected to see. (When they did see Him, they hated and put Him to death, and this Messiah is gone to heaven) In becoming Christians, they lost all they had possessed, and gained nothing that was tangible to the flesh. There was, therefore, the constant temptation to deny an unseen Messiah, and to turn back to things seen.

The saint's warrant is the Word of God. The moment he acts upon any object seen, he ceases to act as a Christian. Christ lived, in that sense, the life of faith. (Heb. 12:2) It is the life of faith we get here, not salvation, or the finding peace in the way of faith. Faith is looked at as the power by which they walked.

There are these two things in faith: as it regards,

1st.—PEACE OF SOUL.

2nd.—POWER FOR WALK.

If I talk of faith, I may mean belief of a testimony—a person tells me a thing, and I believe him. But there is another sense in which I may have faith in that man; that is, I may put my trust in him. We often confound these things. There is the testimony of God which I have to believe, and a trusting in God which is the power of my walk.

That which gives me peace, is receiving the testimony of God: I do want confidence in God for power of walk; but I must not confound this confidence in God with His testimony.

We shall find the two things in Abraham. God called Abraham and showed him the stars of heaven, and said, "So shall thy seed be;" and Abraham "believed God." In the offering up of Isaac (vs. 9), there was not the receiving of a testimony, but "believing in God."

Here I am, a sinner with the consciousness of sin; how can I trust in God? I know Him to be a holy God, a hater of sin; how can I trust in Him? I dare not be in His presence with sin upon me—what can meet that? it is not denying the holiness of God; it is not my putting away my sin; but God tells me my sin is put away. I believe Him. This is not trusting in His power. The thing that gives me peace, is my receiving a testimony. My spirit cannot rest, when I am conscious of sin, unless I know that it is not imputed to me; it is God who has seen it just as it is; my being content with myself, will not do; I must have God content about me. There is a wrestling going on in the soul that wants to be content with itself. Believing God's testimony, it would be at peace. It has never yet been brought to feel itself a thoroughly worthless sinner. The question is not as to my not having sin; but do I believe what God says, when He says it is put away? There is really a work of the Spirit of God in this; not in producing what will satisfy me, but in bringing my soul to say, 'It is all over with me.' God often allows it to struggle on; it will try to get better; He lets it, and, like a

man in the mire who pulls one foot out to get the other in, its case is only the worse. The answer to this comes in in the blessed truth of the gospel of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that "whosoever believeth in Him is justified from all things." (Acts 13:38, 39) I find God perfectly at rest; He is resting in Jesus perfectly satisfied. Christ says, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;" and God says, "Sit thou on My right hand." I get rest to my soul because I find that God has not one single thing against me. There is often this struggling under the sense of conviction, before the soul gets peace.

Another thing is the walk of faith. Come sifting, come trial, come what may, the ground of my peace is never touched. If it were not completely settled, done, it never could be, and why? Because it says, that, "without (not "sprinkling," but) shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9:22) Therefore, if not perfectly done, Christ must die again, shed His blood again. But it is finished. The Spirit of God will make me see it; but it is done. I take this word of Jesus, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do;" and I say, It is finished.

Now I get the path of faith opened before me; I am sure God loves me, and is nothing but love; I can, therefore, trust in Him: I know His love; He has saved me as a sinner, I can trust in His love as a saint.

Mark the order in which things are presented here.

To faith, that which is unseen becomes as present, as real, as though present to sight. (vs. 1) Yea, much more so; because there is deception in seen things; but there is no deception in things communicated by the Spirit to the heart.

Through faith we know that creation was by the word of God. (vs. 3)

Then (vs. 4) we come to the great basis on which a fallen creature can have to say to God. Let us look a little at the distinctive character of Abel's sacrifice.

Cain offered to God what cost him more. His was, not the case of a thoroughly irreligious man; he offered to God, worshipped God, and was utterly rejected. He was not an infidel or an irreligious man; but a worshipper, and a rejected worshipper. His worship was founded on unbelief. A sinner, turned out of paradise, he could go to God as though nothing had happened. So with many; they think they can go and worship God, pay a compliment to Him. And what did he bring? The very thing that had the stamp of the curse upon it. God had said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." That is what comes of a person thinking he can worship God ("do his duty," as he terms it); it is the denial of the whole truth of his condition.

What does Abel? Quite another thing; he brings a slain lamb, comes through death (in principle, through the atonement of Christ). He sets between himself and God the testimony of a provided sacrifice. By faith he offered. Before the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the revelation had been that such a thing would be done, as though I were to say to a debtor in prison, "I will pay your debts." All that we enjoy as a finished work was a subject of hope. "Whom God," it is said, "hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the

remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time, His righteousness; that He might be just, and the justifier of Him which believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. 3:25, 26) We are not looking onward to a future sacrifice; I have not a promise of getting out of the prison—I am out. We have a testimony that the thing is done, and the Holy Ghost is the seal of the testimony. The Holy Ghost cannot testify anything to my soul, otherwise than that it is all done, the debt paid, the door opened, all finished. Two things are spoken of in 1 Peter 1:10,12, “the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow:” we are between these two things. The Old Testament both; we come after the sufferings, and look for the glory. The Holy Ghost has been sent down, meanwhile, to testify of accomplished redemption. That is not my hope. I am not waiting for my sins to be put away, they are put away. This is the basis on which we rest. God rests in His Son, and there I rest.

Next (vs. 5) we come to the walk of Enoch. Here I find another thing. (Of course everybody is not translated as Enoch and Elijah were) Not only can I approach God (faith does not merely tell me this), but that has come in which has set death altogether aside. Death belongs to me now; it is not, as it is called, a “king of terrors.” All things are ours—life is ours, death is ours—for we are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. (1 Cor. 3:22,23) In Enoch we find a walk with God, a power of life with God, and such a power that death is not seen. We have the life of the Son of God, and not only His death; the blessed truth, not simply of a made sacrifice, so as to give my soul peace, but that all the power of Satan in death has been destroyed. God allowed Satan to do his worst; all that “the prince of the world “ could do was brought to bear upon His Son. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” “We are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord...confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Cor. 5) What I am looking for, is not to be “unclothed,” but “clothed upon;” but if I die, the life that I have is untouched, and I shall be “present with the Lord.”

Here I find two things which faith recognizes; first, the blood of atonement, by which sin was put away; and secondly, a power of life by which we walk (not merely as His people, but) with God. The result will be that the power of death is entirely gone. We are identified with a living Christ, as we are saved by the death of Christ.

We do not hear anything about “condemning the world” in the case of Abel or in that of Enoch. God “bears testimony to the gifts” of the one, and the other “walks with God.” But I find another thing. (v 7) We are going through the world, and God has given us a testimony about the world, and what is going to happen to the world. He has “appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31) “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Warned of what is coming on the world, he owns and recognizes the judgment, and falls in with God’s revealed way of salvation; and he condemns the world. Mark this, faith “condemns the world;” not merely is it belief in a sacrifice that saves, and power for walk with God; but it says of the world that it is altogether departed from God, and is going to be judged. We have the testimony of the Word of God, that the thing that is coming upon this world is judgment. There is many a

person who, as a saint, would rest in a saint's walk with God; but who shrinks from breaking with the world. The saint is so to act upon this testimony as to the judgment of the world, as practically to condemn it. Had we Noah's faith, as well as Abel's and Enoch's, we could not go with the world. If His people are saved by Him, He is coming to judge the world; and therefore they have their portion with Christ, and in Christ, so that when He comes they will be with Him. As sure as Christ rose from the dead, He is "the Man" God has ordained to judge the world, "this present evil world;" and so sure is there no condemnation for you and for me, if we believe in Him. That by which I know there will be a judgment is that by which I know there will be none for me. How do I know there will be a judgment? Because God has raised Him from the dead. What more has God told me of His resurrection? That my sins are all put away.

There is another thing which we cannot enlarge upon now. (vs. 8) The apostle turns to another point, active manifestation of the power of faith. It was this strengthened Abraham. He trusted in God. God called him by His grace, and he went out, not knowing whither he went. There comes in confidence in God; not simply the receiving a testimony; implicit confidence in God. A person might say, "If I only knew what would be the consequences of my doing so, I could trust God." Then you will never go. Look at Adam; How did Adam act? He had present external things; but he took the devil's word. God says, "You have believed the devil, when you had all My good things, now you must trust Me." You go out not knowing whither you go, because of trusting in the person that is leading you. God will give light enough to say, 'God wills this, and I do not see another step.' When you have turned the corner, you will see what is round the corner.

Further, when we have taken a step, we shall find that the Lord never satisfies us; He blesses, but he does not satisfy. When Abraham comes into the place, which he should afterward receive for an inheritance, what has he got? Nothing. He is still a stranger. This the heart dislikes. Hence the disappointments often experienced. As regards our prospects, we have our own thoughts about them; we are thinking, perhaps, of what we are going to make them twenty years hence; God is going to bring us into His rest.

He brings Abraham into the land, and then He begins to lead his thoughts to another country. He gets near God, and is placed upon a high enough platform of faith to see it is all before him yet. The Lord reveals Himself to him in communion; speaks with him, unfolds to him His purposes; and Abraham worships. He has his tent and his altar. And that is what God does with us; He makes Christians of us, brings us into the land of promise, and makes us see it is all before us yet. This is not the time for rest. The eye becomes clear in the ways of God; and we have the privilege of being strangers and sojourners with God, and we shall be strangers and sojourners, until we get home in the home of God.

Beloved friends, how is it with you as regards this? can you really say, 'My home is in God's home; I have no home till then, and I do not want one'?

There is not anything between us and God—no sin between us and God, or Christ is not there (He is there because He has put it all away); both cannot be there: Are your souls, then, resting on the Lord Jesus Christ? or are you working to settle something that has been settled already?

The Lord give us to believe His testimony, and to trust in His power.

It is characteristic of faith to reckon on God, not simply spite of difficulty, but spite of impossibility.

Faith concerns not itself about means; it counts upon the promise of God. To the natural man, the believer may seem to lack prudence; nevertheless, from the moment it becomes a question of means which renders the things easy to man, it is no longer God acting; it is no longer His work, where means are looked to. When with man there is impossibility, God must come in; and it is so much the more evidenced to be the right way, since God only does that which He wills. Faith has reference to His will, and to that only; thus it consults not either about means or circumstances; in other words, it consults not with flesh and blood. Where faith is weak, external means are, beforehand, reckoned on in the work of God. Let us remember that when things are feasible to man, there is no longer need of faith, because there is no longer need of the energy of the Spirit. Christians do much, and effect little—Why?

Verses 13, 17. Not only were those spoken of here “strangers and pilgrims,” but they “confessed” it. People sometimes wish to be religious in the heart, and not to speak of it; there is no energy of faith there. To see the world to be lost and condemned, to have our hopes in heaven, such facts must of necessity produce a proportionate result—that of making us think and act as “strangers and pilgrims” here. And it will be manifested in the whole life. The heart already gone, it remains but to set out. This evidently involves open and public profession of it, and herein is a testimony for Christ. Who would be satisfied with the friend that owned us not when circumstances were difficult? The concealed Christian is a very bad Christian. Faith fixed on Jesus, we embrace the things we have seen afar off; we are not mindful of the country from whence we have come out, we have at heart that which is before us. Where difficulties are in the path and the affections not set on Jesus, the world rises again in the heart. (Phil. 3:7-14) Paul had not acted in a moment of excitement, to repent forthwith; his heart filled with Christ, he counts all but “dross and dung.” Perseverance of heart marks the Christian’s affections to be onward, his desires heavenly. And God is not ashamed to be called his God.

The aim of the Christian must be heavenly things. The appetites, the necessities of the new man are heavenly. Christianity may be used for bettering the world, but this is not God’s design. The seeking to link ourselves with the world, and the using Christianity for world-mending, are earthly things. God’s design is to link us with heaven. You must have heaven without the world, or the world without heaven. He, who prepares the city, cannot wish for us anything between the two. The “desire” of a “better country” is the desire of a nature entirely from above.

Verse 17-19—Abraham held to the promises more than to natural affection. The strength of the trial to him was in this, that God had pointed out Isaac as the accepted seed—the one connected with the promises. Faith counts on God. God stops Abraham, and confirms His promise to the seed. In obeying, we get an acquaintance with the ways of God, of which, otherwise, we should have had no conception. Unbelief causes us to lose joy, strength, spiritual life; we know not where we are.

Verses 24-26—The carnal heart uses the providence of God against the life of faith. Providence brings down Pharaoh’s daughter to the child Moses. In the midst of the world’s wisdom, at the court of Pharaoh, providence has placed him (as it might seem), to use his influence in Israel’s favor. The first thing faith makes him do, is to leave it all. He might have been able to succor Israel through his influence, but Israel must have remained in bondage to Egypt. Faith is “imprudent;” yet it has that eternal prudence which counts on God, and nothing but Him. It discerns that which is of

the Spirit, and what is not of the Spirit is not of faith, and not of God. To hold to providence thus, is, at bottom, the desire to “enjoy the pleasures of sin;” the world is loved, and there is the wish to lean on circumstances, instead of God; it is not a “good providence” when a man is ruined.

Moses appeared to be weakening himself in preferring the reproach of the people of God, and of the people of God in a bad state. He might see them in a sad condition; but faith identifies the people of God with the promises of God, and judges of them, not according to their state, but according to His thoughts. Energetic against evil, he counts upon God as to the people.

Verse 27. The world would persuade us to be “good Christians,” whilst acting and walking as others. Called to glory, faith of necessity quits Egypt; God has not placed the glory there. To be well off in the world is not to be well off in heaven. “All that is in the world is not of the Father.” To leave the world when the world has driven us out, is not faith, it is to show that the will was to remain there as long as we could. Faith, acts on the promises of God, and not because it is driven out by the world. Moses “ sees Him that is invisible.” This makes him decided. When we realize the presence of God, Pharaoh is nothing. It is not that circumstances are the less dangerous; but God is there. In communion they become the occasion of a tranquil obedience. Jesus drinks the cup; Peter draws the sword; that which brings out obedience in Jesus, is a stumbling-block to Peter. Where there is lack of communion, there is weakness and indecision.

Verse 30. At the blast of rams-horns, after they have been compassed about seven days, the walls of Jericho fall down. Things which appear base and contemptible are not so when done before the Lord. (2 Sam. 6) To faith Jericho’s walls are not, any more than the Red Sea, or the Jordan.

Verse 31. Who would have thought of Rahab? yet, by faith she acknowledges God. Faith makes nothing of distinctions amongst men; it says that God is rich in mercy towards all that call upon Him; there is no difference, for that all have sinned. In the midst of difficulties she sides with the people of God.

The confidence of faith is manifested in the Christian life, as a whole. Christians are often brought to a stand through measuring their own strength with temptation, instead of exclusive reference to God. They go on well up to a certain point. One man talks of his family, another of the future; (if any have not faith, all we can do is to pray for him;) in the various concerns of life, our reasonings mean but this, ‘I have not the faith that counts on God.’ Faith has reference entirely and exclusively to God. Duty ever leads into difficulty; but I have the consolation of saying, “God is there, and victory is certain.” Otherwise, in my apprehension, there is something stronger than God. This demands a perfect, practical submission of the will.

When the children of God are faithful, God may leave them in trial and difficulty, to bring out that in them which is not of the Spirit. He may also allow evil to have its course and test us, in order that we may understand that the aim of faith is not here at all, and see that in circumstances the most difficult God can intervene, as in the sacrifice of Abraham and the raising of Lazarus.

Man looks not beyond the circumstances which surround him To tarry in circumstances is unbelief—affliction springs not out of the dust. Satan is behind the circumstances to set us on; but behind all that, God is there to break our wills.

The Women of the Genealogy

The introduction of four women's names, and of four only into the genealogy of our Lord as given by Matthew, has furnished material for inquiry to many students of the inspired word. That there was a special purpose in it no one who had any right claim to be such could ever doubt. Moreover, a slight glance only at the names so chosen to a place in connection with the human descent of the Lord of Glory would show something of the significance of their being found there. They are precisely such names as a chronicler left to mere human wisdom in the matter, and especially a Jew, however right-thinking, would have kept out of sight; and especially so as there was no apparent necessity for bringing them forward. They were not needed at all as establishing the connection of our Lord with David or with Abraham. No other names of women are thus introduced—neither Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, nor any other; while yet there was perhaps not another who might not seem to have better title to be remembered. These women were of all others, though in different ways, just the blots apparently upon the genealogy. And then, so far from any attempt at concealment of what was discreditable in connection With them, circumstances which needed not (one might have thought) to be referred to are brought in, as if to draw our attention to what otherwise might have been less noticed.

Thus Zara's twin-birth with Pharez, though himself not in the line of the genealogy, is mentioned as if to recall the circumstances of that sin which brought them into being; while Bathsheba, instead of being mentioned by name, is associated as it were with all the horror of the crimes which her name alone one would think sufficient to bring to mind— "her that had been the wife of Urias."

But there is something very beautiful as well as characteristic in this fearlessness of one who, here as in other places—in a mere record of names, as it might seem, as well as on the most solemn passages of our Lord's life—spoke as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. If there be a blot upon the life of one of His people, the God of truth will never hesitate to bring it out, though it might seem to be the furnishing an occasion to those who seek occasion against the truth; and if there be a dark spot that presumptuous man would dare to lay a finger on, on but one of the links (each divinely constituted) of the chain of ancestry of the man, Christ Jesus, the Spirit of God puts His finger upon it first, to invite our attention to it as something worthy of being noted, and calculated only in the mind of faith to beget reverential thoughts and lowly admiration of a wisdom that never fails, and that is most itself when it confounds all other.

Now to a faith that (as is characteristic of it) "believes on him that justifieth the ungodly," the introduction of the names of Tamar and of Bathsheba into the inspired record of the Lord's human ancestry, is pregnant with suggestions fitted to awaken the liveliest emotion. Each of these women of dishonored names and shameful memories had title then in a peculiar way to appropriate those words which recorded Israel's most real boast: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." The human feeling—for there is that in it whatever there may be more—which has given an "immaculate conception" to the mother of our Lord, would have at least provided for the unblemished character of the line of His natural descent; and that feeling would have said, Let Him

have connection with the purest and noblest only that can be found; and thus it is that human thought has been shown folly in the wisdom of One who from the beginning took the “seed of the woman”—first as she had been in the transgression—to bruise the serpent’s head, and heal those that are oppressed of the devil. Fixed, in divine wisdom, in that part of our Savior’s genealogy which no Jew could dispute—for none could dispute that the Christ was to come of David—these names (all perhaps Gentile, and some undoubtedly so) stood there to vindicate the Gentiles’ part in the “child born.” And just so on the face of pretension to human righteousness they stood to vindicate the claim of sinners to Him, whose “body was prepared Him,” that He might die for sinners.

Thus far, then, the meaning of these names in the connection in which we find them is plain enough, and their place in the genealogy not only needs no vindication, but is another note of harmony in that song of praise, which His word, as well as all other of His works, is perpetually singing—seed to sow music in the hearts of the sorrowful, in the assurance of how the sighing of the prisoners has come up before the Lord.

But what if we are able to go further, and to show that not only is this so, but that each of the four names here given furnishes its own peculiar feature to what taken as a whole is really a full and blessed declaration of the story of grace and of salvation—each in its order adding what the former had left out, till the whole is told? Would it not be worthy of God to speak so; to make not only types and parables, but the very names of a genealogy repeat a story He is never weary of telling, however slow man may be to hear?

Let us take up, then, the history of these four names so far as it connects them with this inspired genealogy, and try to read the lesson which is given us by their connection with it.

The history of Tamar you will find in Genesis 38. It is one of those dark chapters of human depravity which the word lays open with its accustomed plainness and outspokenness. Infidels would speak of it as a blot upon the book that contains it; and few perhaps care to read it, least of all aloud. And yet it is a story that will one day again find utterance before the most magnificent assembly that the earth or the heavens ever saw or shall see. And how many such-like stories shall come out then—mine, reader, and yours, not perhaps after all so far removed from Tamar’s and the pure eternal day will not withdraw its beams, and the night not cover it up with its darkness.

What must be told then, may well bear to be told now. The light that shines upon evil deeds is all undefiled by them. If Tamar’s history were a mere thing of the past, and had no voice for succeeding generations, no doubt it had been vain to bring it up; but now let us rather thank Him for doing it, who has given us a page of human history so dark that we have to shudder, so filthy that we have to blush at it. Reader, I ask again, is there no page of your life, that, if it were written by the faithful hand of God, you would have to blush at in like manner.

Now, in all this history of Tamar’s, the thing that strikes me in this connection is, that there is no redeeming feature about it. If I take the record attached to the other names which have place with hers in this genealogy, I may find perhaps in each case something that a little breaks the darkness. But I find nothing similar recorded about Tamar. She comes before me in this picture as a sinner and nothing else. The wife successively of two men, each cut off for his wickedness by

divine judgment, she dares yet in her own person—by crime equal to theirs—provoke divine judgment. But the wonder above all this is, that it is this very sin that brings her name into the Lord's genealogy; for this sin it was that made her the mother of Pharez, one of the direct line of Christ's ancestry!

Is there no voice in this? And is it the voice of the God of judgment, or is it the voice of the God of grace, the God and Father indeed of our Lord Jesus Christ? True, if I look alone at the Old Testament record, it may call up before me as it has called up the time of account and manifestation; but the moment I turn to the New Testament and find Tamar first of women's names in the genealogy of the Lord—Tamar, brought in by her sin into that connection—I find what fixes my mind upon a scene of judgment indeed, and that of the most solemn sort, but where the Holy One of God stands for the unholy, where Barabbas' cross—place of the chief of sinners—bears the burden of One, who alone bare all our burdens, and "with whose stripes we are healed."

O blessed lesson, and worthy of God to give! Tamar's sin her connection with the Lord of life and glory! and O look, beloved, Was not our sin our connection? Did not He die for sinners? Was it not when we confessed our sins, and with our mouths stopped took our places before God, ungodly and without strength, that we found out the wondrous fact that for the ungodly and without strength Christ had died! and that because we were sinners, and Christ had died for such, He was "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Thus Tamar's name, first in this genealogy, is first too in the simple gospel truth that it reveals; and the fact that Tamar is a sinner, of whom I can read nothing but her sin, and whose sin gives her connection in a peculiar way with the Christ who came for sinners, is light and joy and gladness in my soul.

But we must turn to Rahab.

And here again we are not in very creditable company. Rahab is a Canaanite, one of a cursed race, and Rahab is a harlot, sinner among sinners. We seem destined to move in this track. The one thing recorded to her advantage is her faith. That it had fruit too, none can question. She is one whom the apostle James takes up, to ask us, "Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers and sent them out another way?" But even here you will observe the thing he appeals to is not what would in men's eyes make a saint of her. There was no brilliance of devotedness, no wonderful self-sacrifice, no great goodness as one might say. Even in the very thing in which she shows her faith she tells a lie, as if to divorce faith and sincerity, and to give us expressly the picture of a faith that so "worketh not" as to leave the soul still without hope but as a sinner, unable to be justified save before a God who "justifieth the ungodly."

And who can doubt that it was Rahab's faith brought her into the genealogy, as sin had brought Tamar? Without faith she had died with those shut up in Jericho, a cursed woman of a cursed race. Faith removed that curse from her; faith brought her in among the people of God, if it did not attract to her the heart of Salmon, so as in the most direct way to account for those words being in the genealogy, "Salmon begat Booz of Rachab."

Thus the second of these women's names teaches us a lesson as sweet and as needful as the former. "To him that worketh not but believeth" is what we instinctively think of when we think of Rahab: Faith that, while it has that which demonstrates its reality, leaves one still to be justified as

ungodly, nay, believes on One who only does so justify. Faith which looks not at itself, therefore, and pleads not its own performances, but brings the soul to accept the place of I ungodliness only, because for the ungodly only there is justification.

This is very sweet and very wonderful. It is wonderful to find how in the mere introduction of a name into a catalog, the God of grace can speak out the thoughts of His own heart. And it is very sweet to see how constantly before Him is the thought of our need and of His mercy, and how He would by the very wonder, as it were, surprise men's slow, cold hearts into the belief of it.

And now we have got to Ruth: "Boaz begat Obed of Ruth."

But what shall we say of Ruth? Here at first sight our text might seem to fail us, and we might seem to have parted company with sinners. Why, you might say, the Spirit of God Himself takes a book by itself to tell us about Ruth. And true indeed, though it be that she was a Gentile, as Rahab and as Tamar, you might repeat of her what the Lord Himself says of another Gentile: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." With no sword of judgment hanging over her head as over Rahab's, with no tie to connect her with Israel but the memory of a dead husband who had himself abandoned it, with the memory of famine in that land which had forced her husband out, and with the company only of an aged woman, with whom bitter providences, as she deems them, have changed the name of Naomi into Mara, Ruth comes into the land and to the God of Israel, in whose fields she is content to be a gleaner. No, do not think, reader, that I would disparage the worth or blot the fair fame of Ruth the Moabitess. That she was a Gentile only adds to it the more honor, in that among the godless grew her godliness, and that she was faithful where Israel's own children had set her the example of unfaithfulness.

But is there nothing in this very fact, that in company with the names of sinners among sinners we find one who shines, as it were, saint among saints? What does it mean, this putting down of Ruth in company with such names as Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba? Is it not a truth of the same kind as when the Word tells us of one who "gave much alms," and "prayed to God always," that he was to send to Joppa for a man who should tell him words whereby he should be saved? Or as when Zaccheus, standing forth and saying to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor," meets the significant and gentle word— you can scarcely call it reproof— "This day is SALVATION come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

So that, without the smallest word of detraction from Ruth's goodness, but rather allowing in its very fullest all that can be claimed for it, we may fairly draw a lesson from the company in which we find her name, which is of itself full of instruction and of beauty; and Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, side by side in the genealogy, give us but the announcement of Isaiah's vision, which the Baptist's mission went to fulfill: "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Yes, God's salvation, as much needed, and in the same way, by one as another as much of grace to one as to another—to Ruth the Moabitess, as to Rahab, or to Tamar.

But we have not yet got at that which gives fullest significance to this name in the genealogy. Against this Ruth, with all her loveliness and with all her goodness, there was lying a ban which did not lie in the same way against the others. She was a Moabitess, and against these there had

been leveled an express statute of the law. "An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever." (Deut. 23:3) Thus Ruth lay under the interdict of the law. It is striking that it was to this devoted, to this lovely woman that the law applied—not to Rahab, nor even to Tamar—God having thus proclaimed in an unmistakable way the law's character: not bringing it in to condemn, where men's minds would have gone with it, the sinner and the harlot, but introducing it as that which would have excluded the piety of a Ruth. Emphatically was it thus taught, that it was man as man that was shut out from God, not in his sins merely, but in his righteousness, and that if we stand on that ground all "our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

But the law does not keep Ruth out. Moabitess as she is, she does enter into the congregation of the Lord. The law is set aside in her behalf, and instead of her descendants being excluded to the tenth generation, her child of the third generation sits upon Israel's throne, and hears the promise which confirms that throne to his heirs for succeeding generations.

Thus another principle comes out in bright relief. If God takes up the sinner and the harlot on the principle of faith, law is set aside by the very fact. "The law is not of faith." "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested," "even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe." This is what Ruth is witness to. The Moabitess comes into the congregation of the Lord, spite of the law expressly leveled against her to keep her out; and in all this we find but another utterance of this self-same story of grace which in so many ways our God tells us.

One name alone remains—one truth has yet to be uttered. God takes up sinners then by faith. "Faith is reckoned for righteousness." Not as if faith were righteousness, or its equivalent—that would be quite another thing; but God, who had been looking (to speak humanly) for righteousness by law, had ceased to do so. The law had returned Him answer, "There is none righteous; no, not one." Thenceforth the principle was changed "Faith" was "reckoned for righteousness:" faith that did not pretend to righteousness at all, for it was in one who "justified the ungodly."

But if God receives sinners, to what does He receive them? Is it a complete salvation they obtain, or are there conditions still to be met before the final goal is reached and there is complete security? On what, in short, does the ultimate salvation of the believer rest? This is a question which evidently needs answering before the soul can be completely satisfied and at peace. It is one thing to be now in the favor of God, and it is another thing to know that I can never lose it. And the more I look at myself, if it depend upon myself, the more I must be in dread of losing it.

Moreover, there are those who will allow of a free present salvation, who will not allow of one that gives security absolutely for the future. With them the sinner may be saved without works; but the saint may not. The legalism shut out at one entrance gains admittance at another, and the result in either case is the same. Self-sufficiency is built up; self-distrust taught to despair; the work of Christ is practically displaced from its office of satisfying the soul, and the grace of God effectually denied.

The Scripture speaks as decisively on this point as on any other. On justification by the blood of Christ it builds the most confident assurance as to the future. It tells us that inasmuch as "when we

were yet sinners, Christ died for us. MUCH MORE then, being now justified by His blood, we SHALL BE SAVED from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” (Rom. 5:8-10)

And when I turn to this last name of the four, and find “her that had been the wife of Urias” taking her place with Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth in the genealogy of the Lord, it seems as if the text just quoted were repeated in my ears. For the moment I think of Bathsheba, a greater name than hers, linked strangely with hers in the crime which it recalls, come in to efface her almost from my mind, David it is I think of—David, child of God, Israel’s sweet psalmist! in whose breathings the souls of saints in every age have poured, out their aspirations after “the living God;”—David fallen, and fallen so low that we cannot marvel if his name be side by side with Tamar’s. David, man after God’s heart! Oh, how many of the Lord’s enemies hast thou made to blaspheme! how many of the Lord’s people hast thou made to mourn for thee! Was that thy witness to what God’s heart approved? Was that thy soul’s panting after Him? What! murder a man in the midst of faithful service to thee zealously rendered, that thou mightest hide thine own adultery? Was that, the man who, when flying from the face of his enemy, and when Providence had put that enemy within his power, cut off but his skirt, and his heart smote him for it? Ah, sadder than thy heart could be for Saul, we take up thine own lament over thee: “How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished.”

And surely, O Lord our God, in Thy presence shall no flesh glory! If David could not, could we? Alas, if I know myself, what can I do but put my mouth in the dust, and be dumb forever before the Lord! All flesh is as grass, and all the, glory of man as the flower of grass.” And “let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” The voice that comes to me from David’s sin is infinitely more than David’s condemnation. It is my own. Can I pretend to be better? Can I take my hand from his blood-stained one? Ah, no! I accept with him my own condemnation; and not as a sinner merely, but as a saint. From first to last, from beginning to end, the voice of David’s fall brings to me the assurance that the justification of the ungodly must be my justification still. It is like that voice of God, strange men may call it, and contradictory in its utterance—which, having pronounced man’s sentence before the flood, and destroyed everything living, because “every imagination of the thought of man’s heart was only evil continually,” after the flood declares: “I will not again curse the ground for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living as I have done.”

Blessed be His name, who will not trust His salvation to my hand. My “life” depends but upon the life of Him who has taken His place in heaven, after He had by Himself purged my sins; as much “for me” there in the glory as “for me” upon the cross. He, is the accepted One; I but “in Him.” “Because He lives, I shall live also.”

If David could have taken his salvation out of God’s hand, he surely would have done it in the case before us. That he could not I read in this woman’s name, partner in his sin, recorded in the genealogy. Once again, as in Tamar’s case before, I find sin connecting with the Savior of sinners. It was not that God did not mark, and in a special way, His abhorrence of the evil. It was only grace, really, to do that. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;” and no wonder, therefore, if adultery and murder sprung up again and again in David’s path. No marvel that the

sword never departs from his house, and that his wives are dishonored in the face of the sun. But in the midst of all this growth of thorn and thistle—sure fruit and consequence of sin—one floweret springs up from this cursed ground, type and witness of the grace that, where sin has abounded, over-abounds. From this David, and this Bathsheba, whom sin has united together, a child springs whose name stands next in the line of the ancestry of the Lord; and who receives, as if to confirm this, a special name, “Jedidiah,” “beloved of the Lord.”

And is it an imagination, or is it more, that there is something in the name—the other name of this child born—which harmonizes with all this? I will not say, but if Solomon, “peaceful,” be a strange name in so near connection with so sad a history, it is not an unsuited one to follow in this genealogical list; not an unsuited one to be in company with Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, or Bathsheba. And it is a blessed one to end with the history of four names, which, when God utters them, can be made to speak of what He must love well to utter, or He would scarcely take such strange occasion to remind us of it.

And if to any there seem after all in this something that seems too much like a mere wonder to be God’s utterance, I would beseech such an one to remember how once a burning bush was made just such a wonder to attract a passer-by, and how, when he turned aside to see, a voice out of that bush proclaimed that God was really there. Even so may it not be strange that He should attract now by a kind of wonder, to listen to a story which He loves to tell, and for those who turn aside to see, may the same voice, now as then, be heard.

F. W. G.

Jacob Dying

It is interesting to mark the comment of the Holy Ghost Himself on the history which He Himself has penned: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." As the Holy Ghost knew what particulars were to be recorded in the lives of those of old, so He can best fix our souls on the special points of instruction which their histories are designed to afford. In the enumeration of the saints of old, borne witness to for their faith, we find our attention called to circumstances which we might hardly have noticed. The notice in Hebrews 11 of the eventful life of Jacob, refers to this chapter of Genesis. "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." We see here that the Holy Ghost fastens on those instances in the lives of the saints of old which especially evinced faith. He characterizes faith as being precious. "By faith Jacob..."

There is great force in that word, "rich in faith." (James 2:5) The soul which knows the God with whom it has to do is very "rich." It has pleased God to reveal Himself in all the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus, and these riches can alone be appreciated and possessed by faith. The Holy Ghost reveals them to those whom He has quickened to believe in Jesus. These are the riches which faith can call its own; they are inalienable. On this ground we find the apostle Paul taking the standing of one who was able to confer more than he had received, at the very moment he is thanking the Philippians for their liberality towards him "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:19) The apostle had been well trained in that school which makes its scholars "rich in faith." He had, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, stripped himself of everything which might have been reckoned either a natural or an acquired advantage. (Phil. 3:7, 8) But he had learned the difficult lesson, "in whatsoever state I am, to be content." The Philippians had lovingly supplied his want; but he, in his eager pursuit of winning Christ, was "rich in faith." He knew what riches he had in Christ, and what riches were still to be had in Him; and, therefore, could confidently return the Philippians a far greater blessing than that which he had received from them. "My God," says he (that is, he reckons upon having God for his God, for his portion, and, therefore, he can say, my God), "shall supply all your need." Surely this same ground is open to ourselves to take; but we have made little progress in that school wherein the apostle was so great a proficient. In order to become "rich in faith," many of us have to be beaten out of confidence in our own advantages, as Jacob was, rather than to learn their worthlessness by faith, as Paul did.

It was when Jacob fled from his brother Esau (Gen. 28), when his "staff" was his only portion—his all (as he says to the Lord, chapter 33:10, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands"); it was when "the stones of the place" were his pillow that Jacob had his most wondrous vision- "the ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." Then it was that the Lord stood above it, and revealed Himself to Jacob as the God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac—and He engaged also to be his God. Jacob had his "staff" as a pilgrim wanderer, but Jacob had the God of Abraham and

Isaac for his God. And how rich he was, had he only known it. He was never richer all his life through than at this moment. He started then, not to seek his fortune, but with his fortune already made. He had God for his portion. And if Jacob is to take the higher place of the blesser, (“without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better,”) it must be by learning the riches he was in possession of when he had only his “staff” in his hand, and the stones of Luz for pillows: he must learn to be “rich in faith,” in having the Lord for his God.

Is it not hard, beloved, for us to realize, that, as poor ruined sinners in ourselves, the moment we are, by the grace of God, brought to receive Christ, we are rich indeed; and not only rich, but, like Jacob with his “staff,” poor, yet making many rich? It is hard to realize that our fortune is already made. We start on our Christian career, as blessed of God, and as having Him for our exceeding great reward, as well as for our shield. And we become “rich in faith” when we experimentally know this, and can attach more value to the blessing of a poor saint than the gift of a great man.

Here, in this chapter of Genesis, we have Jacob presented to us, after all his many wanderings from place to place. He had proved the God with whom he had to do. How manifestly had God shown His faithfulness to Jacob, in all the engagements He had made to him, when, on leaving his father’s house, he was a houseless, homeless pilgrim at Luz. God had graciously provided for him, in giving him “meat to eat, and raiment to put on.” We find him here (not in Canaan, but in Egypt) on his deathbed, and, as we are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “leaning on the top of his staff.”

Behold everything in keeping with the dying pilgrim.

He is a stranger in a strange place. He has his staff to lean on, but he has God for his portion. Surely Jacob now realized that he had been substantially blessed at Luz, that he was really enriched then; and never, at any period of his life, was he so fully enriched as when he had only his “staff” in his hand, and heaven opened over him to bless him. He had been well stripped of all his confidence by the way, and now is about to close his career with no more than that with which he had set out— “his staff” in his hand. Doubtless, his “staff” had been with him in all his wanderings; it now brought the early scene of Luz vividly to his recollection. And, when weighed down with weakness in the full confession of his pilgrim character, he takes the high place of the blesser. He can now, with far greater confidence, bless both the sons of Joseph, than he could have done when possessed of temporal riches. “By faith he blessed both the sons of Joseph.” He had an insight into the divine counsels, and learned the divine order. Without anything but his “staff,” in the attitude of a worshipper, he could say, with an intensity of meaning, “I know in whom I have believed.” He had learned the God with whom he had to do. “God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.” (vss. 15, 16) It was by faith that Jacob blessed both the sons of Joseph. The retrospect of faith leads the soul to rest on the proved faithfulness of God, and to reckon on all the fullness of God. And “God is faithful;” that is enough. “He is faithful that promised.” Such is the portion of faith. “Leaning on the top of the staff;” destitute of outward means; but able to speak very confidently, because faith leads to God, and brings in God. “My God shall supply all your need,” says the apostle; “The God who fed me all my life,” says the patriarch, “bless the lads.”

And if we, beloved in the Lord, were on our deathbed, what should we find? We, in God’s mercy, may have proved, as Jacob did, our own riches; but we shall not find ourselves a bit richer than

when first we started on our pilgrim course. We were then only sinners saved by grace; but what riches are ours as such The highest riches, even “riches of glory;” as it is written, “that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.” (Rom. 9:23) We have much, very much, to learn by the way, deeply humbling to ourselves, yet redounding to the praise of the glory of His grace. But that which a Christian dies with is not the experience gathered by the way, but the faith which led him at the first, as a ruined sinner, to the cross of Christ. The first truth is the last truth. The grace of God, as revealed in the cross of His Son, is the truth to live by, and to die with.

Jacob was a dying. He says boldly, “Behold, I die: but God shall be with you.” He speaks of death, “leaning on the top of his staff;” as if still pursuing his pilgrim career, and about to remove from one place to another. He desired only to take possession of the land of Canaan, by death, as Abraham and Isaac had done. (Chapter 47:29-31) This is all. God is the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac. He is still in covenant with them. He has never dissolved His relationship with them, but is unchangeable towards them in it. Jacob had faith in God. Death would not dissolve his relationship to God, even “the God of Bethel.” He, as his fathers, “died in faith, not having received the promises” (Heb. 11:13), but having so “embraced them,” that he could reckon on God making all good in resurrection. Yes, “He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him.” Here was the confidence of Jacob. Here were the riches of Jacob. Here the expectation of Jacob. It was what God was to him, even the living God— “Behold, I die: but God shall be with you.”

Happy pilgrim! the “staff,” on which he leaned, led his soul back to Luz. And what was Jacob at Luz? nothing but a houseless, homeless, destitute wanderer; but to him, in these circumstances, Luz is changed into Bethel—the house of God. There God found Jacob, and God blessed him as a pilgrim, having nothing but his “staff.” And, as Jacob received the blessing, so now he gives it to both the sons of Joseph. Jacob had no claim on God for a blessing. He was a fugitive from his elder brother Esau, to whom by natural right the blessing belonged. But God allows of no rights. He acts according to the counsels of His own will. He can challenge the assertion of man’s rights. “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob.” (Mal. 1:2) And now Jacob, blessing in the name of God by faith, has such intelligence in the mind and ways of God as to bless both the sons of Joseph; and in doing so, again to traverse the order of nature. He could look at his grandchildren, and see the blessing of God coming on them, as freely, from the grace of God, as it had come on himself. Surely the thoughts of Jacob were fully occupied with God. His own life would have afforded him but a sorry retrospect. He had tried to get the blessing in his own way, but it had only led him into trouble; and he had learned, by bitter experience, that the ways of God were both higher and better than his own. How faithful had God been to His “worm Jacob.” And what must be the thoughts of every dying saint? Surely not of themselves, but thoughts of God; of original grace taking them up when dead in trespasses and sins, and making them sons and heirs of God. Such are the thoughts of the soul, if it be in a healthy tone, at such a season. It will pass in solemn review all its failures. This will indeed humble; but it will, at the same time, lead the soul to see all these blotted out by the God with whom we have to do.

“Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see.” (vs. 10) Never, it may be, since he had received the name, by having the hollow of his thigh put out of joint (chap. 32), did he so fully realize that he had power with God and man as on his dying bed. He had now “no confidence in the flesh.” Dim, as to His natural eye, but clearsighted by faith, he guided his hands

“wittingly.” Jacob had exercised his own natural shrewdness in many ways in his past life; but now, in the fading away of his natural powers, faith is very keen in the discernment of the ways of God. “And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life-long, unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.” (vss. 14-16) Joseph, the interpreter of God’s ways to Pharaoh, could not in this instance see as clearly as Jacob. (vss. 17. 18) It needs an exercised soul, as well as a spiritual gift, to see clearly the way of grace. Pre-eminent indeed does Joseph stand, both as to gift and moral worth, above his father Jacob. But Jacob had been well sifted, and had learned experimentally his need of grace. Parental fondness, the right of primogeniture, and so on, may occupy the mind, where there is distinct gift, and that from God; but the soul well exercised in grace knows that one great truth, “No flesh shall glory in His presence.” Faith in Jacob could see clearly into God’s ways. Jacob had learned that it must be all of grace. “I know it, my son, I know it.” (vs. 19) He knew it was not the elder, and he did it “wittingly.”

And where have we often found the wisest counsel? In the gifted teacher, or in the ungifted, yet experienced saint? Where have we found real spiritual discernment? Has it not been among the simple-minded believers who have been learning their need of Christ in their own souls? How “wittingly” have we found the hands guided, where there has been faith in God, in the very case where even the possessor of a real gift might mislead us. Joseph thought his father was making a great mistake; and we often, when walking by sight, and not by faith, do the same, calculating upon some human claim or other, whereas God has ever shown that “His ways are not our ways.” “The elder shall serve the younger.” Jacob was sent forth in life to learn this lesson, and having learned it experimentally, at the close he is able to guide his hands “wittingly.”

Have we yet learned this lesson, the entire setting aside of the flesh and the all-sufficiency of God? Were we to live and learn for a hundred years, it could only be to get this lesson by heart. Jacob’s history is written for our admonition; but we ought to learn the lesson more quickly, and more deeply too, because we know the risen One, and our union with Him. Our very axiom is, “The flesh profiteth nothing.”

What a blessed testimony does Jacob bear to the faithfulness of God— “The God which fed me all my life long, unto this day.” When Jacob walked by sight, he did not so clearly see God feeding him, and caring for him; but, “leaning on the top of his staff,” he retraces all God’s ways by faith.

If any one character could have set aside the faithfulness of God, it is that of Jacob. It was marked by low cunning, and crookedness of policy, from the outset, with regard to his brother Esau. But this did not at all interfere with God’s fidelity to him. Looking he sees, and I doubt not sees with joy, the failure of all his scheming and policy. Jacob is absorbed in one single thought—the grace and faithfulness of the God with whom he has to do. He was never saved from a single danger by his own policy; but Jacob can pass over all his own failures, in the overwhelming thought of God’s grace towards him. And, beloved, will not our souls be able to rejoice in seeing the failure of every work of our own, in which we might have confidence at the time we did it? Shall we not be glad to see all that we have done in the flesh burnt up? that that alone which was of the Spirit, and done to the glory of the Lord, might remain. And if we are “wise after the flesh,” the penalty is sure; God will

take us in our craftiness; for neither by strength nor by wisdom shall man prevail.

And what a blessing the lads got from the dying pilgrim. There was great faith in Jacob, to be able, in holy confidence of soul, to transfer the blessing from himself to them. He was "rich in faith" himself; and bequeathed his riches to Joseph and his sons. "Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers." Even as another pilgrim "rich in faith" said to the elders of Ephesus, "Ye shall see my face no more;" but, "I commend you to God," (Acts 20).

Jacob did not say, Because I have not dwelt in the land, I have not got the blessing. No! he had it by faith. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." God is always the same to faith. Faith raises us above all human thoughts, and gives us to rest in God. Surely, surely it is blessed, when stripped of every confidence here, we are able to look above circumstances, and trust in God Himself.

And is not this the way in which God is now leading our souls He is not only showing us the emptiness of everything here, in order to prove His all-sufficiency, by leading us to the fullness which is in Christ Jesus; but He is also showing us how prone we are to misuse the very blessings which He has given to us, by resting in them, instead of living by faith in God. The process of stripping is indeed painful, under all circumstances, but it is peculiarly so when even what we have is taken away from us because of our misuse of the blessing. Surely the experience of many of our souls is that we have been entrusted with blessing and did not know how to use it aright. It has pleased God to strip us of all our ornaments, that He may know what to do with us. And having thus made room for Himself to come in, His grace has abounded again over our sins, in leading more practically to "live the life we now live in the flesh, by the faith of the Son of God," bringing us to know the immense blessing of His presence by the way, in reviving our faith in the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, when everything entrusted to man's responsibility has failed "Blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help; whose hope is in the Lord his God.... which keepeth truth forever.... which giveth food to the hungry..... The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous: the Lord preserveth the strangers; the Lord shall reign forever and ever." (Psa. 146)

May we know more and more of "the God of Jacob." And then, if the Lord delay His coming, and we have to gather up ourselves on our beds, we shall be able to say with Jacob, "Behold, I die;" "but God liveth."

Hope to the End

How blessed is it, beloved, to dwell on that “abundant mercy,” that eternal love of our God, which has “called us unto His kingdom and glory,” giving us a “lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” “to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us!” How blessed, too, to consider our security, our eternal security— “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time!” The word kept is in the original a very strong word, and implies most clearly the situation of the church as engarrisoned, enclosed, guarded, protected by the power of God against all the powers of darkness. “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matt. 16:18)

But while many would take advantage of this precious truth—while many say they will be “kept” anyhow, we would reply, “Nay, we are kept through faith.” It is only as we are living by faith, realizing the power of faith—faith which “overcometh the world”—that we realize what is that power of God by which we are “kept.” (1 Peter 1:5; 1 John 5:4,5)

Beloved, we would that the world should see what we are, as well as that we should know what we shall be! “Now are we the sons of God!” Oh, let us consider what the relationship is, and what we ought to be as “sons of God,” as “obedient children!” (1 Peter 1:14)

Where ought we to be living? With God! in God! not “in the world.” What ought we to be doing? Loving and keeping the words of Jesus; not “fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts in our ignorance;” then would He come, and the Father would come, and make their abode with us. (John 14:23) “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

But, beloved, what is the church doing? Is it living in heaven as it ought to be? Is it dazzling the world with the glorious manifestation of the holiness and power of God? Is it reflecting the brightness of His image, and thus being “the light of the world”? No! believers are groveling as in the mud, disgusting the world itself with their religion. Oh, believe me, it is better not to be professors at all! Such religion makes infidels Alas, alas! how has the church lost her strength, her power, her comfort! how has she lost the mind of God! thrown herself out of her right position! Instead of bearing testimony against evil; instead of believers being as Christ upon earth, What have they done? Why, joined with the evil, joined with the world, encumbered themselves with worldly trammels, bound their feet with manacles! Instead of waiting for that which is here spoken of as “ready to be revealed in the last time,” in eager expectation for the coming of their Lord (as they ought to be, and would have been, if faithful), what are they doing? Most of them wishing to delay His coming, willing, yea, gladly willing, to put it off, if they could, another eighteen hundred years.

Does not this show, beloved, that we are living upon something here? that we have, or are desiring to have, a portion here? I believe there is nothing so calculated to unearth us as the realization of the coming of Christ. We see the effect of it in the church eighteen centuries ago. They did not calculate the probable number of years that might elapse ere their Lord's return; they were expecting, they were desiring that it might be in their time. That will be the day of "salvation" to the church; that will be the time of the church's glory. We shall see our Lord "face to face;" "we shall be like Him." Those who have gone before are happy, unspeakably happy—"with Christ; "but they are not yet as happy as they will be, not yet "like" Jesus, not yet "conformed unto His image." They are still waiting the coming of the Lord. (1 Thess. 4:18) And this, beloved, is what we should all be looking for; for this should we be found ready, as those who have their loins girt about and their lamps burning.

Oh, let us then imitate the example of those who ran in an earthly race, and for an earthly prize! They looked well to their feet that nothing might impede their course; they kept their eye fixed on the laurel; and shall we, we who are running for an incorruptible crown, for an unfading inheritance, shall we, ought we to loiter by the way, turning aside for every the veriest bauble that we meet with on the road? When we have such glory before us, shall we be attracted by the tinsel of Satan's glory, setting our affections on dust and ashes, that which will be food for the flames at the coming of Christ? Sad truth for the worldling, that all he has gloried in, all he has been heaping together for himself, he is only laying up in store against the day of the wrath of God.

Beloved, it is impossible for us to grasp at things "before" and "behind" too. Were we "pressing forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" were we "reaching forth unto those things which are before," we must be forgetting those behind. Were we looking up, gazing with the eye of faith on our portion above, could we be groping in the dirt of this world for what we might find there? Faith is an anticipating grace; faith is a substantial reliance on the verities of God.

We cannot now comprehend what it is to be "heirs of God." "Heirs of God!" Oh, what a thought! The utmost expansion of faith cannot attain unto it. Like the queen of Sheba, who, much as she had heard of the glory of Solomon, when she came, declared that the half had not been told her, so dazzled was she with all that she beheld; so will it be with us when we shall "see the King in His beauty," when we shall "behold the land which is very far off." Oh, gladly would my soul now bask in the beams, in the full effulgence of eternal glory—that glory which shall as far exceed all other glories as the brightness of the meridian sun surpasses every lesser light! Oh, beloved, how shall we be then amazed at the recollection of things which now have power to draw off our attention and distract our thoughts!

Beloved, let us give heed to this word: "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." When the Edomite asked reproachfully, "Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?" the watchman said, "The morning cometh." So, beloved, when in these "last days" we find "scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" we may joyfully reply, "The morning cometh." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light." Let us not be satisfied with putting off a little evil here and a little evil there; but let us obey the command of God the Lord, when He says, "Come out, come out, and be separate from it all." Let us not suffer a hair's breadth

of evil to stand in our way! let us deliver ourselves from that worldly burden that weighs down the heads of believers, and prevents them from looking up and seeing that their redemption draweth nigh! "Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Let us show to the world that "our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself! "Let us stand fast in the Lord!"

Language fails us, it is utter beggary when we attempt to describe the future glory of the saints, or what it will be to be "like Jesus;" we cannot get further than the apostle did, when he said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Yet all the revelation of that future glory is intended by our God to have its present practical influence on our souls, just as John adds, "And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Oh that the power of God may be more manifest in us! Oh that we may rise out of the dust, rise in all our proper glory, and show the world what are our hopes and expectations, show that eternity is written upon them, show that eternity is written too upon our actions, beloved, as well as upon our hopes!

When everything that the world is now rejoicing and glorying in shall become the object of God's wrath and fiery judgment, when they shall call on the rocks and hills to fall on them and hide them in vain, the saints shall prove that their crowns are incorruptible, and their inheritance that which fadeth not away.

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

O Savior! Whom absent we love;

Whom not having seen we adore,

Whose name is exalted above

All glory, dominion, and power:

O come and display us as Thine,

And leave us no longer to roam,

Let the light of Thy presence, Lord, shine,

Let the trumpet soon summon us home.

When that happy morning begins,
When we in Thy glories shall shine,
Nor grieve any more by our sins
The bosom on which we recline;
O then shall the mists be removed,
And round us Thy brightness be pour'd!
We shall meet Him, Whom absent we loved,
We shall see, Whom unseen we adored.
And then never more shall the fears,
The trials, temptations, and woes,
Which darken this valley of tears,
Intrude on our blissful repose.
Or, if yet remember'd above
Remembrance no sadness shall raise,
They will bring but new thoughts of Thy love,
New themes for our wonder and praise.

Lot's Choice; or, Present Advantage

There is much profitable instruction in tracing, in contrast, the characters of Lot and Abraham. Both were saints of God, yet how different as to their walk! how different also as to their personal experiences in regard of peace, joy, and nearness to God! And there is ever this difference between a worldly-minded believer and one, through the grace of God, true-hearted. In the Scriptural sense of the term (2 Peter 2:8), a "righteous man," Lot was "vexing his righteous soul from day to day." Abraham walked before God.

The Lord cannot but be faithful to His people, still He does mark in their path that which is of faith and that which is not of faith, and Lot's trials are the consequences of his unbelief. There is one thing very marked in his course throughout—great uncertainty and obscurity as to his path and as to the judgment of God, because of not realizing that security in God which would have enabled him to walk straight forward, whilst there is no hesitation in things connected with this world. And it is thus with ourselves if we have not taken Christ for our portion heartily. Abraham's was a thoroughly happy life—he had God for his portion.

Lot is seen rather as the companion in the walk of faith of those who have faith, than as one having and acting in the energy of faith himself. This characterizes his path from the beginning. Therefore, when put to the test, there is only weakness. In how many things do we act with those who have faith before having it for ourselves. It was thus with the disciples of the Lord, and the moment they were put to the test, there was weakness and failure. The soul will not stand, when sifted through temptation, if walking in the light of another.

God's personal call of Abraham at the first is mixed with a sort of unbelief in Abraham, much like the reply in the gospel, "Lord, suffer me first to go home and bury my father." He sets out, but he takes Terah his father with him, and goes and lodges in Haran (he could not carry Torah with him into the land of Canaan). Now God had called Abraham, but not Terah. He left everything except Terah, and entered into possession of nothing. But he tried to carry something with him which was not of God, and he could not. It is not until after Terah's death that he removes into Canaan where God had called him (Compare chap. 22:1, and Acts 7:4) "So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken into him; and Lot went with him.... they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

Lot (though having faith) goes in the path he treads as the companion of Abraham. As to actual position he stands with Abraham. He is truly a saint of God, though afterward we find him treading the crooked path of the world's policy.

God blesses them. The land is not able to bear them so that they may dwell together. (Chap. 13) They have flocks, and herds, and much cattle, and there is not room for them both—they must separate. Circumstances, no matter what (here it is God's blessings), reveal this.

They are in the place of strangers, that is deer ("the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land"). They have nothing in possession, "not so much as to put a foot upon;" all rests on their

valuing the promises. (Heb. 11:9) They have just two things, the altar and the tent. Journeying about and worshipping God, they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Abraham confesses that he is such; he declares plainly that he seeks a country; “wherefore,” we are told, God is not ashamed to be called his God. (He is never called “the God of Lot.”) This acts upon the whole spirit and character of Abraham.

The land is not able to bear them that they may dwell together, there is a strife between their herdmen, they must separate. Abraham says, “Is not the whole land before thee? take what thou wilt, do not let us quarrel: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left; the promise is my portion; I am a thorough stranger, the city of God is open in glory before me.” His heart is upon the promises of God, and everything else is as nothing in comparison. It might seem a foolish thing to let Lot choose—to give up to Lot, the right to do so is certainly his own; but his heart is elsewhere, his faith goes entirely free from earthly advantage.

Not so Lot—he lifts up his eyes—the plain of Jordan is well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord, and he chooses it. There is nothing gross or wrong in itself; in his choosing a well-watered plain; but it just distinctly proves that his whole heart is not set upon the promises of God. Thus is he put to the test. And thus, in the way of the accomplishment of God’s purposes, character is displayed. Abraham’s conduct has for its spring a simplicity of faith which embraces God’s promises (Heb. 11:13), and wants nothing besides. Faith can give up. The spirit of a carnal mind takes all it can get. Lot acts upon the present sense of what is pleasant and desirable; why should he not? what harm is there in the plains of Jordan? His heart is not on the promises.

The companion of Abraham, he is brought to the level of his own faith.

But he will dwell in the cities of the plain, if he chooses the rivers of the plain. It is not his intention to go into the city; but he will get there step by step. (He must find trouble in the place he has taken pleasure in) There is not the power of faith to keep him from temptation. Where there is not the faith that keeps the soul on the promises, there is not the faith to keep it out of sin. It is not insincerity, but peoples’ souls are in that condition, and God proves them.

Abraham’s path, all the way through, is characterized by personal intimacy with God, constant intercourse with God, visits from God; the Lord comes to him and explains His purposes, so that he is called the “friend of God” (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23); and this not only as to his own portion, but as to what He is going to do with Sodom—the judgment He is about to bring on Sodom, though personally he has nothing to do with it, and the promise is his hope. (Chapter 18) So now He tells His people what He is going to do about the world. Though their hope is connected with their own views, with the promises and the heavenly Canaan, He takes them into His confidence as to what is to happen where they are not to be.

Lot, the while, is vexing his righteous soul. Does he know anything about the purposes of God? Not a word. He is saved, yet so as by fire; though a “righteous soul,” his is a vexed soul, instead of a soul in communion with God, vexed “from day to day” (there is so far right-mindedness that it is a vexed soul). He is there before the judgment comes with his soul vexed, whilst happy Abraham is on the mount holding conversation with God; and when it does come, how does it find him? With his soul vexed, and totally unprepared for it, instead of in communion with God about it.

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation,” and He delivers “just Lot.” But, whilst thus vexing his righteous soul with their unlawful deeds, the men of the city have a right to say to him, “What business have you here? this one came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge. (vs. 9) You are quarreling with sin in the place of sin.” They have a perfect right to judge thus. All power of testimony is lost, by reason of association with the world, when he ought to be witnessing to his total separation from it: there is vexation of spirit, but not power. When Abraham got down into Egypt, he had nothing to do but to go right back to the place of the altar he had built at the first. Lot testifies, but he cannot get out of the place he is in: the energy that ought to have thrown him out is neutralized and lost by his getting into it; his daughters have married there; he has ties where his unbelief has led him. It is far more difficult to tread the uphill road than the downhill road.

Whenever the counsels of God are revealed to faith, it brings out the spirit of intercession. The word to the prophet, “Make the heart of this people fat” (Isa. 6), at once brings out, “O Lord, how long!” So here, Abraham pleads with the Lord to spare the city. (But there are not ten—there is not one righteous man in Sodom with the exception of Lot) As regards his own position, he is looking down upon the place of judgment. And in the morning, when the cities are in flames, he finds himself in quietness and peace on the spot where he “stood before the Lord” (vs. 27), not at all in the place where the judgment had come, solemnized indeed by the scene before him, but calm and happy with the Lord.

The Lord sends Lot out of the midst of the overthrow. Angels warn him, and faith makes him listen. But his heart is there still. There are connections that bind him to Sodom, and he would fain take them with him. But you cannot take anything with you for God out of Sodom, you must leave it all behind. The Lord must put the pain where you find the pleasure. “While he yet lingered” (there is hesitation and lingering in the place of judgment, when the judgment has been pronounced; he ought to have left it at once; but the place, and path, and spirit of unbelief enervate the heart), “the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters” (the Lord being merciful unto him); “and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.” And now it is: “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.” (vs. 17) As for the goods, the sheep, and the much cattle, he must leave them all behind. If the Lord’s faithfulness is shown in saving Lot, it is shown also in breaking the links that bind him to the place. His mind is all distraction. He says, “Oh, not so, my Lord. I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die.” He has lost the sense of security in the path of faith. Such is ever the consequence of the path of unbelief in a saint of God—he thinks the path of faith the most dangerous path in the world. Lot has become used to the plain, and the place where Abraham is enjoying perfect security and peace is a mountain. The Lord spares Zoar at his request, and lets him flee thither; but on seeing the judgment, he flees to the mountain, forced to take refuge there in the end.

This is an extreme case; we shall find the same thing true in various degrees. Abraham could give up (that sacrifice always belongs to faith); but there are trials to the believer, because of unbelief—because he is a believer, but in a wrong place. Lot was a “righteous man;” but, when he did not walk in the path of faith, he had vexation of soul and trouble—a righteous soul, but where a righteous soul ought not to be. Observe his incapacity simply to follow the Lord. Observe all his uncertainty. So will it be with us; if we are walking in the path of unbelief, there will be trouble

which is not our proper portion, but which comes upon us because we are in a wrong, worldly place, the trial that belongs to unbelief. We may be seeking the compassion of the church of God when we are only suffering, like Lot, the fruit of our own unbelief—the simple path of faith having been departed from, because we had not learned to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Giving up is our proper position, simple sacrifice in the knowledge and present consciousness that “all things are ours.” But the promise is “a hundred-fold more in this present world,” and that is not vexation of spirit.

Jonathan: The Lord Is My Helper

In the doings of Jonathan, we get energy of faith in the midst of sad confusion in Israel.

The people of God had sought in a carnal way to establish themselves against their enemies. A people of no faith to lean immediately upon God, they had asked for themselves a king; and, whilst testifying to His own rejection by them, God had instructed Samuel to hearken unto their voice in all that they said, and make them a king. "Give us a king to judge us like all the nations," was their cry, as again (even after the prophet had warned them as to consequences in accordance with the divine testimony)," Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." (Chapter 8) The carnal desire is met, and Saul set up to war against Israel's enemies.

Such is the state of things in the midst of which we find Jonathan; and, though he enters not into the full mind of God, he is able to act in the energy of faith.

It is hard for faith to endure the afflictions of God's people, and the dishonor done in it to God Himself. Jonathan endures it not—he has faith in the God of Israel, and he makes up his mind to attack the Philistines. He calls to his armor-bearer, and says, "Come, and let us go over unto the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side." (vs. 1) The sin of the people of God may have subjected them to the power of the "uncircumcised," but that cannot subject the rights of God. Such is faith's reasoning. And nothing is more simple. The moment there is separation unto God, a standing with Him, there is zeal for God and strength in His service. But he confers not with flesh and blood, "he told not his father." There was no faith in Saul; and had he consulted him, Saul would most probably only have discouraged—with faith, he would have gone himself—he would either have stopped or hampered him; when he does act, it is only to trouble. Faith has to act on its own responsibility. One way in which we very constantly fail, is in asking counsel of those who have not the faith or the light we ourselves have, we thus sink down to their level.

All that could give authority, or accredit it, in the eyes of the people, religious too, was with Saul. The king, the priest, the ark, were all there. But Jonathan waits not for the people. He has none but his armor-bearer with him; and so much the better for him, for he is not troubled with the unbelief of others. Where there is a single eye, there is ever confidence in acting, and not hesitation. The flesh may be confident, but its confidence is in self, and therefore only folly. Faith makes nothing of circumstances, because it makes God all. It is not that difficulties in themselves are lessened, but that God fills the eye.

The Philistines' position is a strong one; amidst precipitous rocks, What could human energy avail? Jonathan has to climb up upon his hands and feet. (vs. 13) The oppressors are there too in great numbers, and well armed. But faith, with a single sword, counts God sufficient. "Come," is the unhesitating word, "let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us." (vs. 6) The "uncircumcised" have no strength when looked at thus; they have not the God of Jacob for their help, their hope is not in the Lord. "There is no restraint to the Lord

to save by many or by few.” The enemy may be as the sand on the seashore for multitude, that is nothing, and faith knows it. He can give strength to one sword to subdue a host.

Jonathan seeks not other help. Happy in his companion, a man of a kindred spirit (his answer bearing him the witness, “Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart” v. 7), he at once discovers himself to the Philistines. (vs. 8)

We have already remarked on the strong, simple confidence of Jonathan in the Lord’s power; another thing that characterizes his faith is the consciousness of the impossibility of the link between God and His people being broken. Sad as the condition of that people is—the Philistines in power in their midst, pillaging a defenseless land; no means of resistance left to them, not a sword or a spear (except with Saul and with Jonathan) found in Israel (chap. 13:19, 22); the very king they have in their midst, one they have sinned in setting up—this touches not His faithfulness. The Philistines are delivered into the hand of Israel (not into his own), in the judgment of the man of faith. (vs. 12). In isolating itself with God, faith identifies itself with His people. It loses sight of self, passes over their desolations and recognizes all that is theirs in God. Jonathan is as the Lord’s hand. And see what boldness. Though Israel be not able to sharpen a mattock, in the name of the God of hosts, the Lord, God of Israel, he goes straight on his way.

But, then, whilst he goes forward thus, conferring not with flesh and blood, there is nothing of boastfulness, no acting in fleshly haste and excitement. His expectation is from God. He can discover himself plainly to the garrison of the Philistines, telling them, as it were, “Here am I, an Israelite;” but he will wait and see. If they say, “Tarry until we come to you,” he will stand in his place, and will not go up to them. But if they say, “Come up unto us,” he will go up; the Lord hath delivered them into their hands. There is to be the sign. (vss. 9, 10) In other words, he will wait for them to come to him, or he will go throw himself into the midst of their camp, just as the Lord may bid. He will not make difficulties for himself; but he will not turn away from difficulties which meet him in the path. His is the real dependence of faith.

Having done this, the very haughtiness and scorn of the hostile power instruct him as to what to do. “Behold,” say the men of the garrison one to another, “the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves;” and then, indolently and with fleshly confidence, taunt these true Israelites, “Come up, and we will show you a thing!” (vs. 12) It is the sign for Jonathan; “the Lord hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.”

In the energy of faith he goes forward and climbs the rock, his armor-bearer following. The Philistines fall before him; it is comparatively easy work for the armor-bearer to slay after him. The power that inspires Jonathan acts for him The Lord is really there; He uses Jonathan as an instrument, He puts honor upon the arm faith has strengthened, but He manifests Himself. The terror of God falls upon the enemies of Israel. (vss. 13, 15)

But what of Saul? He has been left tarrying under a pomegranate tree in Migron, whilst God is triumphing over the Philistines through Jonathan. (vs. 2) “And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another. Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us.” (vss. 16, 17) All that is regular as to form is with Israel, but not faith. “And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not there.” That is all they know about it.

“And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God.” (vs. 18) Here, again, there is form—the form of honoring the Lord, in seeking His guidance. It seems all right, yet it is but the form. Saul will have the ark brought; but while he talks with the priest, the tumult of defeat in the host of the Philistines still going on and increasing, he bids him stop: “Withdraw,” he says, “thine hand.” (vs. 19) There is no simplicity of dependence upon God; but the uncertainty and bewilderment of unbelief.

He joins the battle. (vs. 20) But it is not as entering into the spirit of the thing—he has no sense of that on which Jonathan had counted, the secret of Jonathan’s strength, “there is no restraint with the Lord to work by many or by few.” He calls the people around himself, and adjures them, saying, “Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies.” (vs. 24) “So none of the people tasted any food.” There is great apparent energy, it is true; but it is not of the Spirit of God, so that when he gets into the tide of victory he is in reality only a troubler, distressing Israel and hindering the pursuit. It is a carnal and selfish zeal. We may get into the path of faith, but we shall find there that nothing but faith can walk in it: let the flesh mix itself up in the work of faith, it is only for weakness.

The people come to a wood, there is honey upon the ground, yet no man puts his hand to his mouth, for they fear the oath. (vss. 25, 26) Jonathan has not heard that oath, wherefore he puts the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dips it in an honeycomb, and puts his hand to his mouth, and his eyes are enlightened. (vs. 27) And when made acquainted with the curse, and seeing the people faint around him, he at once exclaims, “My father hath troubled the land; see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they had found; for had there not been now a much greater slaughter amongst the Philistines?”

Happy Jonathan! Faith is so occupied with its work, and has so the sense of God’s love and grace, that it has full liberty, and whatsoever God presents in the way, it can thankfully avail itself of, taking it and going on; whilst the carnal zeal of that which is but an imitation of faith, and which never works with God, makes a duty of refusing it. Had Jonathan not been occupied heart and soul in the Lord’s work, he might have stopped to think about the honey; as it is he merely takes it for refreshment, and passes on. Through the energy of faith, he is carried clean out of the knowledge of the oath (vs. 27), out of the reach of this unbelief. He can avail himself of the kindness of his God with joy and thanksgiving, and pursue his course refreshed and encouraged, whilst the people (who had not the faith to go with him) are under the curse, and cannot. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Saul has put both himself and the people under this miserable restraint (if the flesh puts itself under bondage, it must keep its oath), and, in result, they are led into sin; for they are so hungry, that when the time of the oath is expired, they fly upon the cattle taken as spoil, and slay them, and eat the flesh with the blood thereof, thus violating a direct command of God. (Deut. 12:22,23)

The effect of all this is that of making faith guilty for acting in liberty. Such is ever the way of the flesh in its mixing itself up with faith.

At a moment of manifest outward blessing Saul must build an altar, and make much of the Lord’s name, just as previously he had professed to seek counsel at the ark. He builds his altar. (vs. 36) But let us mark the emphatic comment of the Holy Ghost, “This was the first altar that he built unto

the Lord.” Then, through the priest, he consults God as to pursuing the Philistines; “but He answered him not that day.” (vs. 37) On this he seeks, by an appeal to the “God of Israel,” to discover the hidden and hindering sin. (vss. 36-41) The Lord indeed acts, yet it is only to manifest the folly of the king; the “perfect lot” is given and Jonathan is taken. (vs. 41)

“Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die. And Saul answered, God do so and more also: thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.” (vss. 43, 44)

The people do not allow this. They interfere, and say, “Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground: for he hath wrought with God this day.” That is self-evident. “So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.” (vs. 45)

He had “wrought with God.” His was the simple, happy path of unhesitating faith which counts on God, on His faithful connection with His people, and walks in the blessed liberty of taking the refreshment He may give by the way—liberty for refreshment, not for licentiousness, while the flesh is making its solemn resolutions not to touch, nor to taste, nor to handle, and then, the occasion serving, setting aside the authority of God. Faith of this sort confers not with flesh and blood; it acts from God, and it acts for God.

All the religious actings, all the forms of piety, are with Saul. He has the ark and the priest. He makes the vow to abstain from food; manifests zeal for ordinances; prevents the people eating flesh with the blood; builds his altar, when others have got the blessing, and takes the credit to himself. He can be religious, when he has comfort and blessing; but there is no reference to God in faith, so as to go through difficulties with God. There is energy, but it is energy in the flesh; deliberation, when God is acting; and action, when he does act in haste and bewilderment.

The Lord preserve His people from the guidance and help of unbelief in the work of faith, blessed in the simplicity which acts with Him.

The Opened Heavens

The Epistle to the Hebrews strikingly illustrates one quality of the Book of God. It may be read in various lights; yet no one ray interferes with another. In six or seven ways this epistle could be read with the greatest ease. I will specially look now at the first two chapters. It opens the heavens to you as they now are. How blessed is the introduction of such a thing to the heart! You look up, and see the physical heavens above you; but it is only the superficial heavens you see. This epistle introduces the inner heavens to you, and not in a physical, but in a moral, character. It introduces us to the glories surrounding and attaching to the Lord Jesus, now accepted in the heavens. We are thus enabled to see the heavens in which He has sat down; what He is about there, and what will succeed those heavens. When the Lord Jesus was here, as we learn in Matthew 3, the heavens opened to get a sight of Him. There was an object here, then, worthy the attention of the heavens. He returned—and the heavens had an object they had never known before—a glorified man. And now it is the office of our epistle to show us the heavens as the place of this glorified man. And as in Matthew we get the heavens opened to look down at Christ here, so in the Hebrews you get the heavens opened, that you may look up at Christ there.

But supposing you ask, Is that all the history of the heavens? Have you gone to the end. Indeed, I have not. In the fourth and fifth chapters of the Apocalypse, we get the heavens preparing for the judgment of the earth. Then, at the close of the volume, I find the heavens not only the residence of the glorified man, but of the glorified church. What a book it is that can present to us such secrets as these! It is a divine library. You take down one volume from your shelf, and read about the heavens; in another volume you read of man in ruins. Take down a third, and you read of God in grace; and so on in precious, wondrous variety. Now we will set ourselves down before chapters 1 and 2. “When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand at the Majesty on high.” That is just taking up the pledge I gave, that the epistle is going to open to us the heavens. The Lord has been here purging our sins, and He has gone up to occupy the heavens as the purger of our sins. Supposing I had been to a distant country, I might describe it to you so as to fill you with delight, and with desire to visit it. But when the Holy Ghost comes, and shows you the distant heavens, He does more than this. He shows you that your interests are consulted there. Our representative is seated in the highest place—and seated there in that very character. Is it possible to have a more intimate link with the place? It is a wonder we are not all on the wing, to get there as soon as we can! To think that because He came to die a wretched death for us, He is seated there! I defy you to have a richer interest in the heavens than God has given you.

Now, in verse 4, we see that not only as the purger of our sins, but in the verity of His manhood, He is there, seated above the angelic hosts. We have seen already what an interest we have in Him as the purger of our sins. Now, the chapter introduces Him to us as the Son of Man above angels. Man has been preferred to angels. Human nature, in the person of Christ, has been seated above angelic nature, though it be in Michael or in Gabriel. The whole of chapter 1 is thus occupied in giving you two sights of Christ in heaven. What two secrets they are! The purger of our sins, and very man, like ourselves, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

I read the first four verses of chapter 2 as a parenthesis. Do not you like these parentheses? The Holy Ghost speaks the language of nature. We see friends, when conversing together, turning a little aside, to converse about one another. So the apostle speaks here: "I am teaching you wonderful things. Do take heed that you let not such things fall on a careless ear." We must not be mere scholars. If we be disciples of a living master in the school of God, we shall have our consciences exercised while we are pursuing our lesson. That is what the apostle is doing here. That parenthesis falls on the ear most sweetly and acceptably.

But though a parenthesis, it opens a new glory to us. How the field of Scripture teems with fruit! It is not a thing you have to till diligently and get but little fruit. That parenthesis contains another glory of Christ. (Surely we ought not to need exhortation!) He is seated there as an apostle—My apostle. What does that mean? He is a preacher to me. God spake in times past by the prophets. He is speaking to us now by the Son; and Christ in the heavens is the apostle of Christianity. And what is His subject? Salvation. That salvation which, as the purger of our sins, He wrought out for us, and which, as the apostle of our profession, He makes known to us. There is more furnishing of the heavens for you.

Then, verse 5 returns to the theme of chapter 1. It goes on with the distinctive glories of Christ, as super-eminent, above angels. "For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come." What is "the world to come"? It is the millennial age which we read of in Psalm 8. We have three conditions of the Son of Man here. "A little lower than the angels;" "crowned with glory and honor;" and "set over the works of God's hands." So that the world to come is not put in subjection to angels, but to the Son of Man. Now you find that you have an interest in this glorified man. I was saying that if I went to a distant land, and described to you its scenic wonders, you would desire a sight of them. But this epistle shows you that you have a personal interest in these glories. Is there a single point that the Son of Man has traveled, in which you have not an interest? The apostle traces it here for you. So that, again I say, this epistle is opening the distant heavens to your view, and showing you the glories that attach to Christ, and that you have an immediate, personal interest in those glories.

In verse 10 a new thought comes in. "To make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Only pause here for a moment. It became the glory of God to give you a perfect Savior. Do you believe it? What thoughts rise on the soul when we come to that? Are you in possession of Him, so that you never in a single thought are tempted to look beyond Him? We have got an unquestionable, infallible salvation, one that will stand the shock of every coming day.

From verse 11 we further see our interest in the glorified man. "Both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Not ashamed! Tell it out that earth and heaven may hear! This glorified man is a brother of the elect of God. He is "not ashamed," because of their dignity. Not merely because of His grace, but because of their personal dignity. He has appointed me a share of His own throne.

Is He ashamed of His own doings—of His own adopting? Do not get creeping, cold thoughts, as you read Scripture. Our thoughts of Christ should be such as to take captive our whole man—to bear us on eagle's wings. "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." Christ raising and leading the song of the ransomed ones, and not ashamed to be found in their company! "And again, I will put my trust in Him" He did that when He was here, and we do it now. "And again,

behold I and the children which God hath given me.” There is our interest in the glorified man.

Then we return to see what He was in humiliation. “He took not on angels; but He took on the seed of Abraham.” He left the angels where He found them. The angels excelled in strength. They kept their first estate, and he left them there. Man excelled in wickedness; and came and linked Himself with man. Then verse 17 introduces us to another glory that attaches to Christ in the heavens. We see Him there as our High Priest, ever waiting with reconciliation for sins and succor for sorrows. The epistle teems with divine glories. It is massive in glory and ponderous in the divine thoughts that press into its short space.

Chapters 3 and 4—We were observing, that one leading characteristic of this epistle is, that it gives us a look into heaven as it now is—not as it was in Genesis 1 and not as it will be in Revelation 4 or 21. The heaven of Genesis 1 had no glorified man in it—no apostle—no high priest. The heaven of Hebrews has all these. That being the general character of the epistle, we looked at the Lord Jesus as in that heaven. Then, we were observing, how the Lord is there as a glorified man—as the purger of our sins—as our apostle preaching salvation, and as the high priest making reconciliation for sins. Every page is fruitful in casting up the glories of the Lord Jesus now in heaven.

Now we will take up chapters 3 and 4. Having been introduced to the heavens where Christ is, and to the Christ that is in those heavens, the chapters 3 and 4 turn a little round on ourselves, and look a little sharply at us, and tell us to take care now that we are traveling along the road in company with Him. The first thought is, that we are to consider Him in His faithfulness. The exhortation here is commonly misunderstood. For what are we to consider the apostle and high priest of our profession? Is it to imitate Him? The religious mind says so. But that is not the point of the passage at all. I am to consider Him as faithful, for my sake, to God; faithful so that I might be saved eternally. If I do not consider Him so, I have more than blunted the point of the passage, and lost the sense of grace. The word should be, not “was faithful,” but, “is faithful,” or “being faithful.” Not in walking down here, but now in heaven. I look up and see Him discharging these offices, faithful to Him that appointed Him. What business have I to imitate Him in His high priesthood? I am to consider Him for my comfort. What a constellation of grace there is in all that! The grace of God that appointed Him, the grace of the Son that discharges the work, and the grace that opens chapter 3 is infinite in magnificence. Could there be sublimer exhortation or diviner doctrine! We get the Son in the highest heavens—there seated as the purger of our sins—the apostle and high priest of our profession—and could any exhortation be more divine than that which tells me to sit still and look at Him in His faithfulness up there?

Then, in verses 3 and 4 and onward, we get further glories unfolded, in contrast with Moses. The first dispensation is here called a house. It was a servant to serve a coming Christ—Moses and the house are identical. All the activities of that dispensation were worth nothing, if they did not bear testimony to a coming Christ. Therefore, it was a servant. When the Lord comes, on the other hand, He comes as a Son, to claim that which is His own, as His own; and the whole thing now depends on this: Will the house over which He is set be faithful to Him? What is your faithfulness? To continue in confidence, and hold the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. “Christ for me—Christ for me!” I’ll take nothing but this all-sufficient Christ. Cling to Him day by day till the wilderness journey is over. Then you are part and parcel of that house over which He presides as a Son. He

not only presides over it, but He claims it as His own—a dearer thought. It is quite right to be subject to Him; but He tells you to lie near His heart. Faithfulness is not merely being subject to the headship of Christ. If I am lying on His bosom, then I am faithful. So that when the Spirit comes to exhort, in chapters 3 and 4, He has not left the high and wondrous ground of chapters 1 and 2. Then, having come to that point, He turns aside to Psalm 95. If you begin to read at Psalm 92, and read to the close of Psalm 101, you will find it a beautiful little millennial volume. It is exhortings and awakenings of the Spirit of faith in Israel; summoning them to look forward to the rest of God. How is that brought in here! The wilderness journey of Israel is a beautiful lively picture of the journey the believer is now taking from the blood to the glory. People, sometimes, at the opening of chapter 4, turn in on themselves. But rest to the conscience is not the thing that is thought of at all. It assures us that we are out of Egypt, and looking towards Canaan. The danger is, not lest the blood should not be on the lintel; but lest we should break down by the way, as thousands did in the wilderness. It never calls you to reinvestigate the question of having found rest in the blood—but, take care how you travel along the road. When He speaks of rest, it is the rest of the kingdom He talks of—not the rest of the conscience. Then He calls the whole age, through which we are passing, one day: “Today.” It was a short day to the dying thief—a short day to the martyred Stephen. A longer day to Paul, and a longer day still to John; but, let the wilderness journey be short or long, it is one day, and you are to hold by Christ to the very end. If you are to be partakers of Christ, you must hold fast to the end. Now, what is the Christ of verse 14? A Christ crucified? No; Christ glorified. You are made partakers of Christ in the kingdom, if you hold fast by Christ crucified. Let this “today” ring in the heart and conscience every hour. Holding to a crucified Christ is my title to the rest of a glorified Christ. Two things contest this with you—sin and unbelief. Do not you recognize these two enemies as you pass along? Shall I continue in sin? Am I to give place to one wrong thought? I may be overtaken—but am I to treat them other than as enemies? Then unbelief is an action of the soul towards God. You and I do not know what saintly character is—what it is to be between Egypt and Canaan—if we are not aware that those two things stand out to withstand our passage every day.

Chapter 4 still pursues the subject. The Christ of chapter 3:14 is the rest of chapter 14; Christ, glorified—rest, glorious. He has us out of Egypt. The exhortation attaches to a people out of Egypt. We have left the blood-sprinkled lintel behind. The glorious Canaan is before us. Take heed lest you come short of it. “Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them.” The gospel, not of the blood of Christ, but of the glory of Christ. It took one form in the ear of the Israelites, and it takes another form to us but to them as to us, rest was preached. Then he beautifully falls back on the Sabbath rest of the Creator. The blessed Creator provided Himself a rest after creation. He promised Himself a rest in Canaan after bringing them through the wilderness. Adam disturbed His creation-rest. Israel disturbed His Canaan-rest. Is He therefore disappointed in His rest? No; He has found it in Christ. The secret of the whole book of God is, God retreating into Christ, when man in every way had disappointed Him. Christ is the one who has worked out that rest, and who holds it now, and it remains with Him both for God and for His saints. “Therefore it remains that some must enter therein.” It is no longer a fallible thing depending on Adam or on Israel; therefore, let us take care that we do not come short of it.

Now we get two ways in which to use Christ. We had two enemies in the end of chapter 3; now we have two uses of Christ in the end of chapter 4. We are to use Him as the Word of God, and as the

High Priest of our profession. Is that the way I am using Him? These two uses stand opposed to sin and unbelief. Let the word of God discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. Instead of giving place to your lusts and vanities, invite the entrance of the two-edged sword, that makes no allowance for a single bit of sin. And when you have dragged out the enemy—found some favorite lust lying in this corner, and some unsuspected vanity in that—what are you to do with them? Take them to Christ, and let His High Priesthood dispose of them in the mercy and grace that are in it. There we pause for the present. We have seen the heavens opened, and looked in and found there a man arrayed in glories, every one of which I have an interest in. Then comes the exhortation. Two enemies beset you. Take care. Instead of yielding to them, make use of the two-edged sword; and when you have found them out, take them to Jesus. There is a beautiful suitability between the Christ that is exhibited up above in chapters 1 and 2, and you and I, as we are exhibited here below in all the characteristics of chapters 3 and 4.

Chapters 5 and 6—We will read now to the 10th verse of the 5th chapter; and from there until the close of the 6th, we may observe that the apostle turns aside to a parenthetical warning. He is full of that style; and our style with one another is full of it. Such little breaks and interruptions in a discourse are always grateful to us. In the first ten verses of the 5th a most weighty matter is introduced to our thoughts. In the first verse we get a general abstract thought of priesthood. It is that thing which serves men in their relationships to God. Then the character of service is presented to us. “That He may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins;” that is, that He may conduct both eucharistic services and penitential or expiatory services before God. He stands to conduct our interests with God, in whatever form. He is “taken from among men,” that He may have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. He is not taken from among angels. Therefore we read in Timothy, “the man Christ Jesus.” God, in ordaining a priest for us, has chosen one who can have compassion. We find, at the close of the 7th chapter, that the Lord Jesus was separate from infirmity. But the priest here was one who by reason of infirmity could sympathize. The Lord Jesus had to learn how to sympathize, as well as to learn obedience, by the things which He suffered.

Under the Old Testament Scriptures, two persons are distinctly set in the office of the priesthood. Aaron, in the 8th and 9th of Leviticus, and Phinehas in the 25th of Numbers. The difference between them was this. Aaron was simply called into the priesthood—Phinehas acquired a title to it. When we come to the Lord Jesus, we find that both these, Aaron and Phinehas, are seen in Him. He was “called of God, as was Aaron.” Aaron was a mere called priest. The priesthood of Numbers 25 stands in contrast with Aaron’s. Phinehas was not called, as was Aaron, but he acquired his title. How did he do this? He made an atonement for Israel, in the day of their great breach, touching the daughters of Baal-peor, and enabled the Lord to look with satisfaction again at His erring camp. Phinehas stood forward to avenge the quarrel of righteousness, and to make atonement for the sin of the people. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas hath turned My wrath away from the children of Israel; wherefore say, Behold I give unto him My covenant of peace, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood.” Nothing can be finer than this. You could not have a more magnificent light in which to read the Christ of God than in that act of Phinehas. Aaron was never in this way entitled to a covenant of peace. So you have these two Old Testament lights, in which to read the priesthood of the Lord Jesus. He was the true Aaron, and the true Phinehas. Both these are brought out here. The blessed Lord Jesus was called into office,

as was Aaron; but He was in office because He made an atonement. This earth was like the outside place of the temple, where the brazen altar was. The Lord Jesus is now seated in the sanctuary of the heavens, which God has pitched, and not man, because He has passed by the brazen altar on earth. He has passed it by and has satisfied it. Nothing can be simpler, and yet nothing can be more mysteriously grand. How did God bear witness to the satisfaction of the brazen altar? By rending the veil. Then it is an easy thing to pass in. If God has rent the veil, am I to let it be rent for nothing? If it be now rent, I have as much right to go inside as the Israelites of old were bound to keep outside. By satisfying the altar, He has passed by the rent veil, into the sanctuary in the heavens. All that is brought out here. He glorified not Himself to be made a High Priest. Why is it a matter of honor to be made a High Priest? You'll tell me, that nothing can dignify the Son of God; and I grant it. But let me ask you, Do not men know what it is to have acquired honors, as well as hereditary honors? The son of a nobleman goes to battle; and may he not acquire honors as well as his hereditary family dignities? And tell me, which will he value the most? Those which he has acquired. He himself is more honored by them. His hereditary dignities are his, and no thanks to him; but his acquired honors are more especially his own. Divine things are illustrated by human things. Who can add anything to Him who is God over all, blessed forever? But the Son has been in the battle, and acquired honors that would never have been His, if He had not taken up the cause of sinners; and dear and precious honors they are to Him! That word called is very sweet in the original. God "saluted," "greeted," Him, when He seated Him in the sanctuary, as He greeted Him when He seated Him on the throne: "Sit Thou at My right hand." The Epistle to the Hebrews shows, in the opened heavens, a throne as well as a sanctuary.

In the 7th, 8th, and 9th verses, we find some very weighty truths, connected with ourselves. "Who, in the days of His flesh" (let us mark that with holy reverence), "when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death." The scene of that conflict was eminently marked in Gethsemane. What was the transaction there? He properly shrank from undergoing the judgment of God against sin. "And was heard for His piety." He was heard, because death, the wages of sin, had no claim on Him. His claim to deliverance was allowed. Instead of the judgment of God being sent to wither His flesh, an angel was sent to strengthen Him Yet He suffered death. He might have claimed His own personal exemption from it, yet He went through it. He learned obedience to His commission by traveling from Gethsemane to Cavalry, and He now presents Himself to the eye of every sinner on earth as the Author of eternal salvation. We see the Lord in Gethsemane pleading, as I may express it, His title against death. His title is owned; yet, though death has no claim on Him personally, He says, "Thy will be done!" He might have gone from Gethsemane to Heaven; but He went the rather from Gethsemane to Calvary; and so, being made perfect there, He became the Author of eternal salvation to all who receive Him. Then, when the altar was satisfied, the sanctuary received Him, and there He is. In creation, God planted a man in the garden in innocence; in redemption, God has planted a man in heaven, in glory. There is a glory that excelleth. The glory in redemption leaves the glory that was once in creation as a nothing.

Now we have got down to verse 10. Observe, that the language of verse 10 is taken up in verse 20 of chapter 6, and the argument there has not advanced beyond this verse 10. Supposing, then, I were to take you to chapters 1, 2 and 3 of 1 Corinthians, you would find the apostle there hindered in his teaching. "You are carnal; I cannot teach you with the rich treasures I have, stored up for the

church.” It is so here; only there the evil that hindered was moral: here it is doctrinal. It was very difficult for the Hebrew to detach himself from the things in which he had been educated. He was “unskillful in the word of righteousness.” The legal mind is apt to take up righteousness as Moses did, as a thing demanded from us. God takes it up as a thing that He will give us. And, in the next chapter, finding this hindrance among them, He sounds an alarm, as in the opening of chapter 2, He sounded an exhortation. A carnal mind and a legal mind are two great villains. They are both little foxes that spoil the vintage of God. “Now,” says the apostle, “you must leave these things. I must put you down to another volume, and that volume is perfection.” “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened...” That is, “It is not within my reach to do it.” We must leave it to God, whether they be brought back or not. It is just between themselves and God. It is a terrible thing, having known Christ, to go back to ordinances; but I have no warrant to say that it will not be forgiven in the person of many who have thus been ensnared, but have come back.

Chapter 7—To look carefully at the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ is important to our souls. Therefore, for the present, we will lay aside the parenthesis at the close of chapter 6, and read part of chapter 5 and the whole of the chapter 7. We were looking at the priesthood of the Lord Jesus as reflected in Aaron and Phinehas. Aaron, we saw, was simply called into his office—Phinehas earned his office. We will now look at the Melchizedek phase of the same priesthood.

Supposing I said to you, that this world is a scene of forfeited life—you would understand me. Life is but suspended death. To return to life is to return to God. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Sin worked the forfeiture of life; consequently, if I can make a return to life, I make a return to God. In two characters God visits this world—as a Quickener, and as a Judge; and chapter 5 of John tells us, that we are all interested in one or other of these visits. Now, it is the office of this epistle to let every poor believer in Jesus know that he has returned to life, and that his business now is with the living God, and with God the quickener. “The living God” is an expression that occurs often in this epistle. “Departing from the living God” — “To serve the living God” — “The city of the living God.” The living God thus occupies the field of my vision both now and in glory. I am now not to depart from Him, which intimates that I have got back to Him. I have escaped from the region of death, and got back to the region of life; and by and by in glory I shall find “the city of the living God.” The question is, How have I got back to Him? The epistle beautifully unfolds that. It is a magnificent moral subject to trace the Lord Jesus in His ministry through the four gospels, and see Him from the beginning to the close of His history displaying Himself as the living God in this world.

To mark Him at Gethsemane—to mark Him giving up the ghost—then as the living God rising from the tomb, and bestowing the Holy Ghost. We see the living God in a scene pregnant with death. It is the office of this Epistle to the Hebrews very specially to present Christ as the living God. The apostle is full of the death and the cross of Christ. It would not be the Epistle to the Hebrews if it did not take up Christ in His vicarious character. But though we see the Lamb on the altar, we see the vacant sepulcher too. We have remarked before, that the Lord Himself always attaches to the story of His death the story of His resurrection. “The Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death... and the third day He shall rise again.” We have the same thing here, only in a doctrinal, and not an historic way. The cross is often named, but always in company with the ascension. Take the opening of the epistle. “When He had by Himself purged our sins.” How did He purge them? By death. Death looks at you at the

very opening of this epistle; but at once you read, "Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Again we read, "That He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Does the story end there? No. He is "crowned with glory and honor." What is done historically in the gospels, is taken up doctrinally in the Hebrews. The Holy Ghost is considering the living God in the person of Jesus, as Jesus was exhibiting the living God in His own person. So again in chapter 2, "That through death"—death looks again at you; But what follows? "He might destroy him that had the power of death." Have I not again the empty sepulcher, as well as the altar and the Lamb? I go, in this epistle, to find an empty grave; but not as "Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary." I expect to find it empty. Their mistake, dear women, was that they expected to find it full. I go expecting to find it empty, and I do find it so. When I see the Lamb on the altar, and the empty sepulcher, I have got hold of victorious, infallible life. That is the rock-life of which the Lord spoke to Peter. In chapter 5 we find, that in Gethsemane He transacted the question of His title, and was heard for His piety. He had a moral title to life. Then He surrendered that moral title and took His vicarious place. From Gethsemane He walked on to Calvary. Gethsemane was a wonderful moment. There the great question of life and death was settled between God and Christ; and, instead of taking the journey He was entitled to up there, He went along the dreary road our sins put Him on down here. There is exceeding blessed interest about all that. At Calvary, again, we find Him in death; but the moment He gave up the ghost, everything felt the power of the conqueror. He had gone down into the darkest regions of death, but the moment He touched them, every one of them felt the power of the conqueror. The earth quaked, the rocks were rent, the graves were opened, and the bodies of the saints arose. If we look in chapter 20 of John, we see, not merely the vacant tomb, but the tomb strewed with the tokens of victory—the linen clothes lying, and the napkin, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapt together in a place by itself. We shall never be able to read the mystery of the Christ of God, if we do not remember Him as the living God in the midst of death, getting victories worthy of Himself. We see Him in death rending the veil. In the grave we see the napkin lying wrapped together by itself, to tell the story of conquest. We see Him then with His disciples, and He is exactly the living God of Genesis 1. We find God there breathing life into the nostrils of man—the head and fountain of life. In John 20 the Lord shines under our eye as the head and fountain of infallible, unforfeitable life, breathing on the disciples and saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." In this epistle we find Him in that character—as entitled to life, and as holding it for us. That is His Melchizedek priesthood. He is not merely the living God. He might have been that if He had gone to heaven from Gethsemane; but He went to heaven from Calvary, and is now there as the living God for us; and God is satisfied—to be sure He is satisfied. How could He be otherwise? Sin has been put away, and the blessed God breathes the element of life. It is, so to speak (with worshipping hearts may it be spoken), His native element; and He is satisfied. And God has expressed His satisfaction. But how? When Christ rose, in the face of the world that said, "We will not have Him to reign over us;" God said, "Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." That was His satisfaction in a rejected Christ. When Christ ascended the heavens in another character, as having made atonement, He put Him in the highest heavens with an oath, and built a sanctuary for Him— "The true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man." Is it possible for Him to show us in more interesting form, that He is satisfied with what Christ has done for us?

Are the services of such a High Priest enough for me? They must be so. I am in connection with life, and every question is settled between me and God. He is King of Righteousness and King of

Peace, and He dispenses all you want in the royal authoritative virtue of His own name.

The moment you get the living God expanded in this epistle, you find that everything He touches He communicates life for eternity to it. His Throne is forever and ever—chapter 1 tells you that. His House is forever and ever—chapter 3 tells you that. His Salvation is eternal—chapter 5 tells you that. His Priesthood is unchangeable—chapter 7 tells you that. His Covenant is everlasting—chapter 9 tells you that. His Kingdom cannot be moved—chapter 12 tells you that. There is nothing He touches that He does not impart eternity to. To entitle the Epistle to the Hebrews, in a word, we might say, it is the Loaded Altar and the Empty Sepulcher.

Christ has not put Himself in possession of life to keep it to Himself. The living Jesus in the highest heavens says, “Now that I have got life, I will share it with you.” Oh the depth of the riches!

Chapter 8—We meditated as far as verse 7 of chapter 6, and there we left it, taking up chapter 7. Now we will read the close of chapters 6 and 8. But before we pursue the doctrine of the epistle, we will look a little at what we called the hortatory parenthesis in chapter 6. At verse 10 of chapter 5 we left the doctrine, and from that to the close of chapter 6 is a parenthesis. The apostle, having turned aside to exhort them, we were observing that the thing he feared in the Hebrews was not moral, as in the Corinthians, but doctrinal pravity. And do not we see such moral varieties around us now? One has a Corinthian bias; another has a Galatian bias. The thing he feared in the Hebrews was giving up Christ as the object of their confidence.

What is the dressing that God is giving your heart now? (Ver. 7). It is not law, but grace. Moses was on the principle of law—the Lord Jesus was on the principle of grace; and free, happy, grateful hearts are the herbs meet for such tillage. How is your soul before God? Do you apprehend Him in judgment or in grace? Is the communion of your soul with God in the liberty of grace, or in the fear of a coming day of judgment! If the last, it is not yielding herbs meet for Him by whom it is dressed. Thorns and briers are the product of nature. They are the natural product of a corrupt scene, whether it be the earth I tread or the heart I carry within me. Supposing I am acting in a legal, self-righteous mind, dealing with God as a Judge, is not that natural? But these are all thorns and briers. But if I walk in the filial confidence of one who has trusted in the salvation of God, that is the earth yielding fruits meet for Him by whom it is dressed.

Now what is the ground of the apostle’s persuasion of “better things “ touching them in verse 10? Not confidence in the simplicity of their apprehension of grace, but that the fruits of righteousness were seen among them—beautiful things that accompany but never constitute salvation. Therefore the apostle, seeing this beautiful fruitfulness, says, “Though I am sounding an alarm, I do not attach it to you.” Having got on that ground, he pursues it to the close of the chapter, and does not return to what is doctrinal till he reaches chapter 7. He prays them to continue to minister to the saints. Does your knowledge of Christ lead you to two things—secret communion of soul with Him, and practical energy of Christian walk and fruitfulness? “Now,” says he, “do you go on with the beautiful practical work you have begun. Do not be slothful, but followers of them who, by faith and patience, inherit the promises.” Then he brings out Abraham as one who did not slack his hand to the end. Abraham not only got the promise in Genesis 15, but went on in patience till it was confirmed by an oath in Genesis 22. We are called not only to faith, but to the patience of faith. May you not have a consolation, and yet not a strong consolation? We see it in Abraham He had a consolation in Genesis 15, and a strong consolation in Genesis 22. A saint once said to me,

“In that last sickness the Lord brought me so near Himself, that I felt as if I had never believed before.” The apostle would have us like Abraham (in Gen. 22), that “we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to take hold upon the hope set before us.” This passage is commonly misquoted. It is not a sinner running to the blood for refuge, but a saint running to the hope of glory from the wreck of every prospect here. This is enough to try us. Do you and I sit on the wreck of everything here? Are we promising ourselves hopes for tomorrow? Abraham was a man who fled from every prospect here to lay hold on the hope of glory. The apostle says, “Lay hold on the hope, not on the cross.” The word of God has an intensity that commonly escapes us. Now he returns to the Levitical figures. Does your hope enter within the veil? Have not you a hope about tomorrow? What is the thing the expectation of your heart hangs about? Is it the hope of the return of Christ, or the promise of tomorrow?

“Whither the Forerunner is for us entered.” The Lord Jesus is here brought out in a new character. We see Him in heaven, not only for us as our High Priest, but to secure a place for us with Himself. Oh, if we could unfold the glories of the present dispensation! It is full of glories. Jesus is now in heaven in the glory of a Forerunner—a High Priest—the Purger of our sins. There He sits arrayed in glories. He will put on other glories in the millennial heavens. He will also be King of kings, and Lord of lords on the millennial earth. He is not that now; but there are glories in which He is displayed to the eye of faith. Do you go and meditate, broken-heartedly, on the glories of “these last days,” as they are called in this epistle?

But we pass on to Chapter 8 “We have such an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the true sanctuary, which the Lord pitched and not man.” What exquisite words! What glories filled the heavens in the days of creation! The sun and moon and stars were set there. His fingers garnished them. And pray have not they garnished the present heavens? If there were glories set in the superficial heavens by the fingers of God, there are glories set in the interior heavens by the grace of God. One of these glories is a tabernacle which the Lord has pitched there. Christ came down from the eternal bosom to glorify God on the earth. Was there anything too brilliant in the way of glory, in which to array such an one? What intercourse we get here between God and His Christ—between the Father and the Son. And among the glories that awaited Him there, was a temple pitched by the Lord Himself. The sun comes out of his chamber to run his course. The Creator built a habitation for the sun in the heavens. (Psa. 19) God in redemption has built a habitation for the High Priest; and He is seated there in the highest place of honor. Christ could not be a Priest here. The place was divinely occupied. It has been foolishly said He could not go into the holiest. Surely He could not, for He came of the tribe of Judah. Did He come to break God’s ordinances or to fulfill all righteousness? What business had He in the holiest? A priest of the tribe of Levi, if he found Him there, would have been entitled to cast Him out. He was entitled to everything; but He came as a subject, self-emptied servant. Did He intrude on the two poor disciples at Emmaus? Much less would He, a Son of Judah as He was, intrude in God’s house.

Here we pause a little. In this epistle we find one thing from the beginning to the end, the Spirit is taking up one thing after another, and laying it aside to make room for Christ; and when He has made room for Christ, and brought Christ in, He fixes Him before us forever. And we must all submit to it. Has not God laid you aside, and brought in Christ in your stead? Faith bows to this. It is what He has done in every believing soul. So in chapter 1 He lays aside angels. “To which of the

angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" Oh how faith consents to it! Oh how angels consent to it! Next we see Moses laid aside. "Moses verily was faithful as a servant; but Christ as a Son over His own house." We can part with Moses because we have got Christ—as the poor eunuch could part with Philip because he had got Jesus. Then in chapter 4 comes out Joshua. But he is laid aside also. "If Joshua had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day." Christ is set before me as the true Joshua who really gives me rest. Then Aaron is set aside, to let in the priesthood of Christ; but when I have it before me, I have it forever. He is the administrator of a better covenant. The old covenant is done away, because the Lord has nothing to say to it. And, at the close, we read the beautiful utterance, which might be the text of the epistle, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." He, being brought in, is "the same forever." What a magnificent thought it is, to think of God bringing in the blessed Jesus to the displacing of everything! That is perfection, because God rests in Him. This is exactly the sabbath of old, when God rested in creation. Now God rests in Christ, and that is perfection; and if you and I understand where we are, we are breathing the atmosphere of perfection—an accomplished work—a sabbath. There is nothing more fruitful in glorious luminaries, than the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is an epistle of untold glories, and of inestimable value to the conscience of the awakened sinner. It is the title of my soul to breathe the atmosphere of heaven itself; and if I do not do so, shall I put a cloud on my title because my experience is so poor?

Now, at the close of chapter 8, we see another thing set aside—the first covenant. The covenant that Christ ministers never waxes old. "Your sins I'll forgive, your iniquities I'll pardon." There is no wrinkle on its face. No gray hairs upon its brow.

The Lord touches everything, and fixes it before God forever; and God rests in it. He perfects everything He touches. While everything gives place to Him, He gives place to nothing. And would not you have it so? Would not John the Baptist have it so? When they came to him and said, "Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptiseth, and all men come to Him." He answered, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." This ought to be the instinctive utterance of your heart and mine. If the Spirit has dealt with you in your soul, you ought to say, "Blessed be God for it! He has set me aside to bring Jesus in." There is wonderful unity between the discovery we get here, and the experience of our own souls. We shall never get to an end of these glories, till we are lost in an ocean of them by and by—a sea without a shore!

Chapters 9 and 10:1-18.—We closed at chapter 8; and, pursuing the structure of the epistle, we will now read chapter 9 and down to verse 18 of chapter 10. This is the last section of the doctrinal part; and then, to the close, we get moral exhortations. From the opening of chapter 9 to verse 18 of chapter 10 is one argument.

Suppose we linger a little over the structure of the epistle. Did you ever present a little distinctly to your mind the glories that belong to the Lord Jesus? There are three forms of glory that attach to Him—moral glory, personal glory, and official glory. From the manger to the cross was the exhibition of His moral glories. In "these last days" the Lord is exhibiting some of His official glories, and by and by He will exhibit more of them, as in millennial times. The prophets of old

spake of His sufferings, and the glories which should follow—not glory. But His personal glory is the foundation of every one of these. This is a grand subject for our constant meditation—the glories of the Lord Jesus, from the womb of the virgin to the throne of His millennial power. All through life He was exhibiting His moral glories. The scene for these is past now, and He has taken His seat in heaven; but that has only given Him an opportunity to display others. The four gospels give me a view of His moral glories here. In the Epistle to the Hebrews I see Him seated in heaven now, in a constellation of official glories. In other writings we get His coming glories. Whenever you see Him, you cannot but see Him in the midst of a system of them. In these chapters, 9 and 10, you get what He is doing on the cross, the foundation of every one of His present glories. In the first eight chapters we get a varied display of the conditions of the Lord Jesus now in heaven; and now, as the sustainment of all these, in chapters 9 and 10 we have an account of the perfection of the Lamb on the altar.

Do you ever make “these last days” a subject of thought? Why is the Spirit entitled to call the age through which we are passing the “last days”? We shall have other days after these. Why, then, does He call them the last days? Beautifully so—because God rests in what the Lord Jesus has accomplished, as thoroughly as He rested at the close of creation, in the perfection of His own work. It is not that, in the unfolding of the economy of God, we shall not have other ages; yet, in the face of that, the Spirit does not hesitate to call these the “last days.” In all the Lord has done He has satisfied God. He perfects everything He touches, and makes it eternal, and God does not look beyond it. Everything is set aside till Christ is brought in; but there is no looking beyond Him. “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.” Now, the moment I get God resting in anything, I get perfection; and the moment I get perfection, I am in the last days. God has reached satisfaction, and so have I. Christ may be unfolded in millennial days; but it is the very same Christ that we have now. Shall I get Moses then, or Joshua? They are all (treated in the light of Christ) “beggarly elements.” All give place, one after another; but Christ being introduced to the thoughts of God, God rests in Him; and when you come to see where you are, you are in God’s second sabbath—and see how one thing exceeds the other! The rest of the Redeemer is a much more blessed thing than the rest of the Creator. In Christ you have got perfection—the rest of God—and you are in the “last days.” Now, when we come to chapters 9 and 10 we see Christ, not properly or characteristically in heaven, but on the altar. The glories that surround Him now have been given to us one after another—the glory of the priesthood, the glory of the Purger of our sins, the predestinated Heir of the world to come, the Apostle of Salvation, the Dispenser of the Covenant that never gathers age to itself, the Giver of the eternal inheritance—these are the glories of “these last days.” In chapter 9 verse 10 we see the cross that sustains them all. How blessed it is to track, from Matthew to John, a path of moral beauty! Was the Lord Jesus in office here? No; He was here in subjection. When I have looked at Him thus, I am invited to look upwards. Is it One traveling in moral beauty I see there? No; not that specially; but it is One who has been seated at the right hand of the Majesty with an oath, in the very midst of glorious beauties—One whom the satisfied, unrepenting heart of God has seated there. It was the testing purpose of God that seated Adam in Eden. It is the unrepenting heart of God that has seated Christ in heaven.

And now we come to read the perfection of His work as Lamb of God, as the grand foundation of all these glories. He would not have perfected His moral glories here if He had not gone on to the cross and died there. He would not have had His official glories in heaven if He had not gone on to

the cross and died there. When the Lord Jesus was hanging as the Lamb of God on the accursed tree, and over His bleeding brows was written the inscription in every language, "This is the King of the Jews," they sought to blot it out; but God would not have it blotted out. He would have the whole creation know that the cross was the title to the kingdom. The inscription that Pilate wrote on the cross, and God kept there, is very fine.

Supposing the cross sustains the glory, according to the inscription, now tell me what sustains the cross itself. Is the cross without a foundation? The secret comes out in these chapters. As the cross sustains your hopes, it is the person that sustains the cross. His personal glory is the sustainment of the cross. If He was less than God manifest in the flesh, all He did was no more worth than water spilled upon the ground. Of all the mighty mystery of official, millennial, eternal glories, the cross is the support, and the person is the support of the cross. He must sustain His own work, and His work must sustain everything. This is just the argument of these chapters. There was a veil hanging between the place where the priests ministered, and the mystic dwelling-place of God. The veil was the expression, that that age gave a sinner no access to God. Were there not sacrifices? Yes, there were; and God's altar was accepting them. But they were "gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." Beautifully, then, at this point He comes to your heart, and demands a note of admiration. "For if the blood of bulls... sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Supposing we inspect the Old Tabernacle, and see the beggarliness of all its elements, that the blood of bulls could not bring you into the presence of God; and from the beggarliness of all that, look at the satisfyingness of the blood of Jesus, will you not exclaim, "How much more shall it purge our consciences?" That is the way you are to come to the cross, laying doubtings and questionings aside, and losing yourself in admiration. The thing the Spirit does is to take you gently by the hand, and lead you up to the altar at Calvary, and tell you who is the victim that is bleeding there. None but one who was personally free could say, "I come to do thy will." Have you any right to a will? Has Gabriel or Michael? To do God's pleasure is their business; but here was One who could offer Himself without spot to God. "How much more," then, shall such a sacrifice purge our consciences, and introduce us at once to the living God? That entitled me to say, that while we look at His glories, His official glories, we see that the cross is the sustainment of them all. But if the soul does not know the personal glory of the Lord, it positively knows nothing. That is the secret you get here. He for whom God prepared a body, satisfied the brazen altar, before He went into the holy sanctuary to do the business of God's Priest. And atonement flows from satisfaction. If I find out that Christ's sacrifice has answered the demands of the brazen altar, I see that my reconciliation is sealed and settled for eternity.

The Epistle to the Ephesians tells you to stand upon this, and look round about you at the glories of your condition. The Epistle to the Hebrews shows you the glories of Christ's condition in the compass of about 300 verses. What a world of wonders is opened! You sustained by what He has done; and what He has done sustained by what He is.

Chapter 10:19-39.—We are coming now to another beautiful part of the epistle, and, as we hinted, to a new division of it. We will read from verse 19 to the close of chapter 10. You may have

observed the general structure of the epistles. Take the Ephesians for instance. In the first three chapters we get doctrinal truth, and in the last three the moral application of it. So, in Colossians, Galatians, and Romans. Now, in Hebrews it is the same, and we are just entering now on the practical application of what has gone before.

“Now the full glories of the Lamb adorn the heavenly throne,” as a beautiful hymn of Dr. Watts says. Constantly through this epistle we have been looking up and seeing this. But, let me ask, Do you see glories anywhere in “these last days” that are not attaching to the Lord in heaven? You will tell me that all glory belongs to Him, and I grant it; but I tell you you ought to see glories attaching to yourselves. Such is the wondrous working of God, that He has made the poor sinner a glorious creature. These same last days that have set Christ on high, in the midst of glories, have set the poor believing sinner down here in the midst of glories. I want that you and I be girt up to an apprehension of them. We do not wait for the kingdom to see glories. Is it no glory for you to have a purged conscience? Is it no glory to be fully entitled to be in the presence of God, without a blush? No glory to call God father? to have Christ as your forerunner in heavenly places? to enter into the holiest without a quiver of conscience no glory to be introduced into the secrets of God? If we can lift up our heart and say, “Abba, Father,” if we can lift up our heart, and say, “Who shall condemn?” or “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” if we can believe that we are bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh; that we are part of Christ’s fullness, will anyone say there is no glory in all that? So that this epistle introduces us to most precious thoughts. It tells me to look up and see Christ adorning the throne, and to look down and see the poor sinner shining on the footstool. The world sees nothing of these glories. We only apprehend them in the glass of the Word by faith; but I do say boldly, that I do not wait for the kingdom to know what glory is. I look up and see the Lamb in acquired glories. I look down and see the saint in gifted glories. Now the moral application begins. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” There I look at myself; and will any one say there is not glory in such a condition? That is my title. Now the exhortation is, that you are to enjoy your title. To enjoy is to obey. The first duty you owe to God is to enjoy what He has made you, and what He has given you. “Let us draw near.” Use your privilege, as we say. It is the first grand duty of faith, and I am bold to say it is the most acceptable duty of faith. How narrow we are to enjoy these glories. Do you ever look at yourself in the glass of the word? We are very much accustomed to look at ourselves in the glass of circumstances—in the glass of relationships. If we say, in the secret of our hearts, with exultation of spirit, “I am a child of God;” if with exultation of spirit we say, “I am a co-heir with Christ,” that is the way to begin obedience. Here it is exactly that. “Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.” We should look on ourselves as the priesthood of God. The priests of old were washed when they were put into office. Then every day their feet were washed, before they entered the tabernacle to serve the Lord. The pavement of God’s own presence was not stained by the foot of the priest. He went in, in a character worthy of the place. Are you occupying the presence of God all the day long, in the consciousness that you are worthy of the place? How will you be presented before Him by and by? Jude tells you— “Faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” You ought to know that you are in His presence now, faultless or without spot. We cannot put ourselves in the flesh too low; and we cannot put ourselves in Christ too high. If one may speak for another, we find it much easier to degrade ourselves in the flesh, than to magnify ourselves in Christ. That last is what the Spirit is doing here. Now He tells me, having got into the Holiest, what to do there. If I know my title to be in the

presence of God, let me know also that I am there as the heir of a promised glory; I am there to be kept there till the glory shines out. We are the witnesses of a class of glories, just as the Lord Jesus is the witness of a class of glories. We are in a wealthy place; and, having got in there, we are to hold our hope without a quiver. "Let us hold fast the profession of our hope without wavering" (as the word should be). If we got in without a quiver, we are to hold our hope without a quiver. That is what God has called us to. We are there with boldness; and being there, we are to talk of our hope. And we are to talk of charity also, "to provoke unto love and to good works." What exquisite service! Who can utter the beauties of these things? "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together; but exhorting one another." When you get into the house, what are you doing together? Are you to be down in the depths of conscious ruin? No; but exhorting one another to love and to good works. These are the activities of the house. We dwell together in one happy house, exhorting one another, and so much the more as we point to the sky and say, "Look! the dawning of morning is near; the sky is breaking." We want a great deal more to exhort one another to know our dignity in Christ than to know our degradation in ourselves. It is very right to know ourselves poor worthless creatures. Confession is very right; but to gird up the mind to the apprehension of our dignity is much more acceptable and priestly work than to be ever in the depths. "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee." Here we see ourselves accepted; holding our hope without wavering; exhorting one another; and saying, as we point to the eastern sky, "The dawn is coming."

Then, having thus conducted us to verse 25, he brings in a solemn passage about willful sin. We read the counterpart of this in Numbers 15, where presumptuous sin is looked at. Under the law there were two characters of offense. A man might find a thing that was his neighbor's, and deal falsely about it; or he might lie to his neighbor, and there was a trespass-offering provided. But when a man picked sticks on the sabbath-day, he was to be stoned at once. There remained nothing for him but "a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation." It was presumptuous sin, flying in the face of the legislator. This is the presumptuous sin of the New Testament. It is running in the face of the God of this dispensation, as the gatherer of sticks ran in the face of the God of the law. We are not to be careless about sin. If we do the least sin, we ought to be brokenhearted about it. But that is not the thing contemplated here. It is a defection from Christianity.

Then, having come to verse 31, he exhorts them to "call to remembrance the former days." Let me ask your souls, "Do you all remember the day when you were illuminated?" One might say, "The light shone brighter and brighter upon me." I believe Timothy may have been such an one. Timothy, I have often thought, under the education of his godly mother, may have passed gently into the flock of God. But most people know the moment of their illumination; and if there is a moment of moral energy in the history of the soul, it is the day of its quickening. Why do not you and I carry the strength of that moment with us? Is He a different Jesus that we have now? When I know that the day was when all was over between God and me, and that now the day has come when all is over between the world and me, that is practical Christianity. What was that day that He called on them to remember? The day when, being illuminated, they "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Why was this? How does He account for it? Their eye was on a better inheritance. Let me grasp the richer thing, and the poorer thing may pass away for aught I care. We can account for victory over the world just as easily as we can account for access to God. That, let me

say, is just the knot that this epistle ties. It puts you inside the veil, outside the camp. In the wondrous divine moral character of Christianity, the grace and the blood of Christ work exactly contrary to the lie of the serpent. The lie of the serpent made Adam a stranger to God, and at home in this polluted world—inside the camp and outside the veil. Christianity just alters that. It restores us to citizenship in the presence of God, and strangership in the world; and verse 35 of this chapter is the one verse in this epistle that knits these things together.

Hold fast your confidence, and it will be the secret of strength to you. Where do we see victory over the world? In those who are happiest in Christ. Why are you and I so miserably down in the traffic of the world? Because we are not as happy in Christ as we ought to be. Give me a soul that has boldness and joy in God's presence, and I will show you one that has victory over the world.

Now, the apostle tells us, that a life of patience intervenes between the day of illumination and the day of glorification. I am not to count on a path of pleasure—a path of ease—a path of prosperity—on being richer or more distinguished tomorrow than today; but I am to count on a path of patience. And is not there glory in that? Yes; there's companionship with Christ. No greater glory is or can be yours than to be the companion of your rejected Master. That is your path. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." He was not ashamed to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were strangers here; but if we become citizens here, instead of strangers—strike alliance with the world—He who could say, "I'm the God of My strangers," can say of the citizen of the world, "I have no pleasure in him."

May you and I exhort one another to love and to good works, and, pointing to the eastern sky, say, the day is dawning. Amen.

Chapter 11—We have reached chapter 11. I think we observed that chapter 10:35 was a connecting-link between the two great thoughts of the epistle—that Christianity puts you inside the veil and outside the camp—that is, it undoes the work of Satan, which estranged you from God, and made you at home in a corrupted world. The religion of the Lord Jesus just comes to upset his (Satan's) work. Nothing can be more beautiful than the antithesis which thus shows itself between the serpent and the serpent's bruiser.

The "great recompense of reward" shows itself in the life of faith that we are now going to read about. We are called, as John Bunyan says, "to play the man." If happy within, we are to be fighting without. This chapter 11 shows us the elect of all ages "playing the man" in the power of this principle of confidence. "Cast not away your confidence," for it thus shows that it "has great recompense of reward." Faith is a principle that apprehends two different things of God. It views Him as a justifier of the ungodly, as in Romans 4; but here it apprehends God as "the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." The moment you apprehend God by a faith that does not work, you enter on a faith that does work. And while we rightly cherish a faith that saves our souls, let us not be indifferent to a faith that serves our Savior. How boldly we sometimes assert our title, but do we value our inheritance? It is a poor wretched thing to boast in our title, and yet show that the heart is but little moved by the hope of the inheritance. Just so, if I boast of a justifying faith, it is a poor thing to be indifferent to the faith that we have here in chapter 11. "Now faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Then you are told, that it was the strength of all the worthies in old times, who through it "obtained a good report." It is another proof that, as we have said, everything in this epistle is set aside to let in Christ. Here faith comes in to set aside

law. If I take up the law as the secret power of my soul to do anything for God, I am not doing it for God but for myself. The law might chasten and scourge me, and call on me to work out a title to life. But that would be serving myself. Faith sets law aside. Then, having established faith as a working principle, he begins to unfold the different phases of it from the beginning. I believe verse 3 may have a reference to Adam. If Adam was a worshipper in the garden, it was by faith. He may have looked behind all the wonders that surrounded him, and apprehended the Great Artificer.

Now, some say, they can still worship God in nature; but when we left innocency we left creation as a Temple, and we cannot go back there. Nature was a Temple to Adam; but if I go back to it, I go back to Cain. Here we come to Abel and to revelation. We are sinners; and revelation, which unfolds redemption, must build us a temple. You must take your place as a worshipper in the temple that God in Christ has built for you.

Then we come to Enoch. Enoch's was an ordinary kind of life; but he spent it with God.

We are told in Genesis that he walked with God, and here we are told that he pleased God. As the apostle says in 1 Thessalonians 4, "Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God." To walk with God is to please Him. Can anything be more welcome to us, than the thought that we can give complacency to God? There was nothing in Enoch's life to make history; but whatever condition of life may be ours, our business is to walk with God in it. It is beautiful thus to see an undistinguished life going before a life of great events. You may hear some say, "A poor unnoticed thing am I, compared with some who have been distinguished in service for the Lord." "Well," let me reply, "you are an Enoch."

Now, Noah's was a very distinguished life. Faith laid hold on the warning. Faith does not wait for the day of glory, or the day of judgment, to see glory or judgment. Faith in the prophet did not ask for his eyes to be opened.

Faith here for one hundred and twenty years seemed to be a fool. Noah was building a ship for dry ground; and he may well have been the mockery of his neighbors; but he saw the thing that was invisible. How rebuking to us! Supposing you and I lived under the authority of coming glory—what fools we should be!

But I should not have passed over the word I took for my text. "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Again, I boldly say, you would not have had that definition of faith in Romans 4, "A rewarder of them that diligently seek Him?" 'Why what legal language!' some would say, if they read it in a book. Ah, but it is beautiful in its place. The faith of a saint is an intensely working thing. Will God be a debtor to any man? No. He will pay to those who sow bountifully.

Abraham's life is the next; and a picture of the varied exercises of faith. There was a magnificence in his faith—a victorious quality—a fine apprehension—all these qualities of faith come out in the life of Abraham. He went out blindfold; but the God of glory led him by the hand. So he came to the land; but to him not a foot of it was given. He must have the patience of faith; but whatever fell from the lips of God was welcome to Abraham. Abraham walked all his life in the power of the recollection of what he had seen under the hand of the God of glory. Now, supposing I tell you that the vision of Stephen has gone before every one of you. You need not be expecting the same vision that Stephen saw, but you have seen it in him. They may carry you to the stake, but you may say, "I have seen heaven opened over me, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." If

you and I are simple, true-hearted people, we shall just go forth as Abraham did when he had seen the God of glory.

Then Sarah's was another kind of faith. We must see God as a quickener of the dead. Noah understood God so. The Israelites, under the blood-stained lintel, received Him in the same character. Death was there, and attached to every house in the land; but the Israelites knew God as a quickener of the dead. That is what Noah, Abraham, Sarah, apprehended of God. If I make God less than a quickener of the dead, I make myself more than a dead sinner. It is as a quickener of the dead I must meet with Him.

The 13th is a beautiful verse. The first thing to do to a promise is to apprehend it—then to exercise faith about it—and then to receive it by the heart. They “embraced” them. Their hearts hugged them. How far has my heart hugged the promises? One knows his own “leanness.” But surely the closer we hug them, the more blessedly we shall consent to be strangers and pilgrims in this world. This is a wonderful picture of a heart put into faith. Did they speak of strangership because of leaving Mesopotamia? No; but because they had not reached heaven. They might have found their way back. Abraham could tell it to Eliezer; but that would not have cured their strangership.

Supposing there were a change in your circumstances, would that cure your strangership? Not if you are among God's people. Mesopotamia was no cure. Nothing could cure, end, or close their strangership but the inheritance. On they went to heaven; and God was not ashamed to be called their God.

In chapter 2 we read that Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren. Now, we read that God was not ashamed to call these strangers His people. Why is Christ “not ashamed to call them brethren”? Because they stand in one divine eternal purpose with Him. One family embraces the elect and Christ. How could He be ashamed of such people? And if you have fallen out with the world, God is not ashamed of you. For God Himself has fallen out with it, and He could not be ashamed of you, because you are one mind with Him. Therefore, when they said they were strangers, God called Himself their God. Our hearts are terribly rebuked here. How much lingers in them of striking alliance, and making friendships with the world! Then we see Abraham in another light. Every hope of Abraham depended on Isaac. To give up Isaac seemed not only to become a bankrupt in the world, but to become a bankrupt in God. He might have said, “Am I to become a bankrupt in God and in Mesopotamia.” There could not have been a higher stretch in the believing principle. Have you ever feared God making you a bankrupt in Himself? Has He turned away never to return?

Well, he got him back in a figure, sealed as a fresh witness of resurrection. Do we ever lose anything by trusting God in the dark? If ever any one trusted Him in the dark, it was Abraham.

After passing him we come to Isaac. Isaac showed his faith by blessing Esau and Jacob concerning things to come. This is the little single bit of his life that the Spirit looks at. If we inspect his life, we shall find that that is the eminent work of faith in it. That act shines out under the eye of God.

Jacob is more remarkable, as Noah had been more remarkable than Enoch. His was a very eventful life; but the only thing we get here is, “By faith he blessed both the sons of Joseph.” This is exquisitely beautiful. It shows how much in Christian life may be rubbish. I do not believe

Jacob's life was an exhibition of a servant of God. It was an exhibition of a saint who went astray, and whose whole life was occupied in getting back; and we do not get this act of faith till we come to the close, when he "blessed both the sons of Joseph." There he came in contact with things unseen, and things that came across the current of nature. His life was the life of a man recovering himself; and, just at the close, he did this beautiful service of faith to God in the face of the resentments of his own heart, and the appeal of his son Joseph.

But Joseph's is a lovely life—a life of faith from the beginning. Joseph was a holy man throughout; but there was magnificent outshining of faith just at the close. He had his hand on the treasures of Egypt, and his foot on the throne of Egypt; yet, in the midst of all that, he spoke of the departing of his brethren. That was seeing things invisible. That was the one thing the Spirit has signalized as an act of faith. Why did he talk in this way? He might have said, "Ah, I do not walk by sight! I know what is coming, and I tell you, you will go out of this land, and when you go, take me with you."

The general course of his life was unblameable, yet we do find in his words as he was departing the finest utterance of faith. And now, that is what you and I want. Do you want to be righteous only? You must be so; but will that constitute a life of faith? You must seek to get under the power of things hoped for—things unseen—the expectation of the Lord's return; and till you do so in some energy, you may be blameless, but you are not walking that life of faith by which "the elders obtained a good report." Thus, so far we see faith as a working principle. Not the faith of the sinner, which is a no-working faith. The moment the no-working faith has made me a saint, I must take up the working faith, and live in the power of it. But we must go on. We will not forget what we hinted—that the whole of this chapter 11 depends on, and is the illustration of, the 35th verse of chapter 10. The stronger our faith is, the more our soul is in the possession of mighty moral energy. This chapter shows how this principle of faith gained the day. Do not read it as if it were the praises of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others. It is the praises of faith as illustrated in Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others. What a simple, blessed thing Christianity is! I stand in admiration of it, when I see how the devil has wrought a twofold mischief in putting us outside the vail—inside the camp; and how Christ has wrought a corresponding twofold remedy. Do I rejoice in the thought, that I have gained God, though at the loss of the world? That is Christianity.

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child." What is the meaning of that? It means, that when he was born, there was an expression in his countenance that faith read. "Beautiful to God," is the word. There was a certain beauty in him that awakened the faith of Amram and Jochebed; and they were obedient to it. Was there not a beauty in the face of the dying Stephen? Ought not his murderers to have been obedient to it? They stand in moral contrast to Moses' parents. Under the finger of God they saw the purpose of God, and hid the children. We must linger a little on the two closing verses. They are very weighty, precious, pregnant verses. These elders obtained a good report, but with the good report they did not obtain the promise. It reminds me of the prophet Malachi. "A book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." They are not His made-up jewels yet, but He has their names in His book, and He will make them up and display them as His jewels by and by. So with these elders. Why have they not yet obtained the promise? Because we must first come in, in the rich furniture of this evangelic dispensation, or all they had in their beggarly dispensation would never have done for them. We

find the word better constantly occurring in this epistle. “A better testament” — “a better covenant” — “some better thing for us” — “which speaketh better things than that of Abel.” And we find the word perfect in constant use also; because now everything is perfected. Everything is perfected that gives God rest, as we have already said, and God is not looking for any satisfaction beyond what Christ gives Him He has His demand answered, His glory vindicated, His character displayed, and all in Christ. Now, what is this “better thing” in the last verse? If we had not brought in our Christ, so to speak, nothing would have been done. God having introduced Christ in this dispensation, all the old saints that hung on it are perfected. For, in one light of it, we look at this epistle (as we will now do briefly and rapidly) as a treatise on perfection. Thus, in chapter 2 we read, that it became the glory of God to give us a perfect Savior; not merely my necessity, but God’s glory required it. “It became Him” —consulting for His own glory. It became Him to give the sinner an author to begin salvation, and a captain to close it. The difference between an author and a captain is just the difference between Moses and Joshua. Moses was the author of salvation, when he picked up the poor captives in Egypt; Joshua was the captain of salvation, when he carried them across the Jordan, right into the promised land. Christ is the One who carries us both through the Red Sea and the Jordan, the One who did the initiative work of Moses, and the consummating work of Joshua—our title to be in God’s presence, before it opens the calling that attaches to us. Before Abraham was called out to a land that he knew not, the “God of glory” appeared to him. Does he ever send a man a warfare at his own charges? Does He ever send you to fight with the world before you are at peace with Himself? Everything is for me from the moment I turn to God. I am called in God, to everything that is for me. I am come “to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” This is chapter 12. Before ever David was hunted as a partridge, he had the anointing oil of God upon him

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Then, in chapter 5 we read, "Being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation." Not moral perfection—we all know He was morally stainless—but perfection as "the author of salvation." He would never have been perfect thus if He had not gone on to death; but as it behooved God to give us a perfect Savior, so it behooved Christ to make Himself a perfect Savior. Then, in chapter 6, "Let us go on unto perfection," the apostle says; that is, let us "read our lesson on this subject." Some read this, as if they were to go on till they got no more sin in themselves. That has nothing to say to it. It is as if the apostle said, "I am going to read you a treatise on perfection, and you must come and learn it with me." Then he goes on with the subject in chapter 7. He says, you cannot find this perfection in the law. "The law made nothing perfect." You must look elsewhere. By the law here is not meant the ten commandments, but the Levitical ordinances. In the midst of these beggarly elements you must look elsewhere for perfection. Chapter 9 thus shows you that it is in Christ, and tells you that the moment faith has touched the blood, the conscience is purged; and chapter 10 tells you that the moment Christ touches you, you are perfected forever. Not in moral stainlessness in the flesh, there is no such thing here. The moment Christ touches the apostleship, He perfects it. The moment He touches the priesthood, He perfects it. The moment He touches the altar, He perfects it. The moment He touches the throne, He perfects it. And if He perfects these things, He will, as to your conscience, perfect you a poor sinner. So this epistle is, in one great light, a treatise on perfection. God gave you a perfect Savior; Christ made Himself a perfect Savior. Let me go on to perfection. If I seek it in the law, I am in a world of shadows. When I come to Christ, I am in the midst of perfection. "And there I stand, poor worm," as Gambold says.

Therefore, these saints could not get the inheritance till we came in, laden with all the glories of this dispensation. But now they can share the inheritance with us, when the full time comes. What glories shine in this epistle! What glories fill the heavens, because Christ is there! What glories attach to us because Christ has touched us! Is it no glory to have a purged conscience—to enter into the holiest with boldness—to say to Satan, Who are you, that you should finger God's treasure! We creep and crawl when we should be getting into the midst of these glories and encouraging our hearts.

Chapter 12—We will now read chapter 12. We have looked at the doctrine of the epistle. We are now eminently in the practical part of it; yet the blessedness of the doctrine shines out too. I would just say this first—We have been looking at the various characters in which the Lord has entered heaven. Now here, in verse 1, we get Him in heaven in another character. Do not many crowns belong to Him? Won't you put a royal crown—a priestly crown—on His head? Can you put too many crowns there? What a cluster of glories fill the eye, as we look at Christ in heaven by the light of this magnificent epistle! Now, among other characters, we see Him there as the One who perfected a life of faith on earth, "the Author and Finisher of faith." The counsel of God is busy in crowning Jesus. It is the delight of the counsel of God to crown Him, it is the delight of the Spirit of God to exhibit Him as crowned, and it is the delight of faith to see Him crowned. God, the Spirit, and the faith of the poor believing sinner, all gather round Him, either to crown Him, or to delight in

seeing Him crowned.

Now, we see Him owned in heaven as the One who perfected the life of faith. He passed through it to perfection from the manger to the cross, and is so accepted in the highest heavens. That of course put Him in collision with man. "Him that endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself." This is beautifully pregnant with the thought that He was "separate from sinners." You would not dare to take that language to yourself. It is too lofty a style for any but the Son of God to take. Was anything like that said of Abraham or Moses? No; the Spirit would not have talked so of one of them. So, when you put the Lord Jesus in the wear and tear of life, in company with martyrs, you see Him, as in all other things, taking the pre-eminence. It is so natural for the Spirit to glorify Christ! If He is looking at Him officially, as in the first part of this epistle, it is easy to look at Him with many, many crowns upon Him. Or looking at Him here, it is easy for the Spirit to put this crown of peculiar beauty on His head. He "endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself." It is a description which your heart would condemn you for taking to yourself, though you might be called to the stake.

The cross, in one aspect, was martyrdom. Jesus was as much a martyr at the hand of man, as He was a victim at the hand of God. It is as a martyr we see Him here, and as such we are put in company with Him. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." You have no deeper enemy than your own heart to strive against. It was sin in the Pharisees, sin in the multitude, sin in the chief priests, that carried the Lord Jesus to the cross. But He never had a bit of sin in Himself to strive against. It was sin in others. The apostle then goes on to put you, as a chastened sufferer, in company with the Father. Here we drop company with Christ. For He never was under the chastening of the Father. The moment I get under the scourging and education of the Father, I have dropped out of company with Christ. I am deeply in His company when traveling the path of the martyr. I am not a step in His company when I am under the chastenings of the Father.

So from verse 5 onward you are in company with your heavenly Father. Oh, these sacred, divine touches!—that know when to introduce Christ, and when to let Him disappear! How, or in what form of excellency to display Him, and how to let Him out of sight! There is a glory, a completeness, in the very way in which the task of the Spirit is executed. He walks through life, enduring the contradiction of sinners. I walk through it, striving against sin. Then I am in company with the chastening of the Father—all resulting in a blessed participation in His holiness, but Christ is not there with me. If you put all the wit of aggregated intellects together, could it give you these divine touches that glitter in the Book of God?

In verse 12 we are exhorted not to let our hands hang down. There is no reason why it should be so. Though you are under the scourge, there is not one single reason why your hands should hang down, or your knees be feeble; for the Spirit has shown you yourself first in company with Christ, and then with your Father who loves you. Is there any reason why you should travel as if you did not know the road? This is a beautiful conclusion. We all know how the hands will hang down; but I set my seal to every word of this, and say, "Truth, Lord." There is no reason that we should be fainthearted. Then having come to that, he looks round. Do not let your own hands hang down; and, in connection with others, follow peace—in connection with God, follow holiness. "What communion hath light with darkness? what concord hath Christ with Belial?" "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you." If you consult

at your leisure Deuteronomy 29, you will find a root of bitterness there spoken of; but it is a different kind from this. There, it arose from some man taking up false gods—here, it is from failing of the grace of God. The whole epistle has it as its bearing and purpose, to nail your ear (in Scripture language) to the door-post of Him that is speaking of grace. It is not a lawgiver that is heard, but one who is publishing salvation from the highest heavens. Angels and principalities and powers are made subject to the Purger of our sins; and the Purger of our sins has taken our conscience up to the highest heavens, and every tongue that could lay a charge against us is silenced, as we read in Romans 8 (See also 1 Peter 3:21, 22). Now, take care lest you fail of the grace thus published. It may end in the profaneness of Esau. It has been said by another, that this reference to Esau must have been very striking to the mind of a Jew. “If you fail of the grace of God, you will be left in the position of one whom your nation repudiates.” I do not care what you take up in His stead, if you slip away from Christ, you may be tomorrow in the position of the reprobate Esau. How does Esau stand before you? As the type of that generation who by and by will say, “Lord, Lord, open to us.” But their tears will be as ineffectual as Esau’s by the bedside of his dying father. He came too late. So, when once God has risen up and shut to the door, they will find no place of repentance. This verse 17 is very solemn. It tells me that that action of Esau’s is the presentation to our thoughts of that which is still to be realized in an Esau generation, and only in such. “Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.” Esau despised his birthright, and this generation have refused the grace of God, and despised the Christ that has passed through the world, and died for sinners.

After this, in the 18th verse, we get a magnificent sight of the two dispensations. It is as if the apostle had said: I have been showing you a martyr path, but now I tell you, that the moment you look to God, everything is for you. The martyr path and the chastening of the Father are only further proofs of love. Now, leaving Christ and the Father, we come to God; and you see that all the eternal counsels of God have clustered to make you a blest one, as they have clustered to make Christ a glorious One. Do not be afraid. You are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire. Turn your back on it. The more advisedly I have turned my back on it, the more advisedly I have met and answered the grace and wisdom of God, and rendered the obedience of faith. Am I to be turning round my head—to be looking over my shoulder—to be giving it some glances? Is that the obedience of faith? Then as to my face. Where is that turned to? To a cluster of blessedness. I was introduced by my own self-confidence to law, and found not a thing for me. Now I have turned my face right round, and I see everything for me. “Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God—the heavenly Jerusalem—to an innumerable company of angels—the general assembly and church of the firstborn—to God the Judge of all.” The Lord, even in judgment, is for us; for it is one office of a judge to vindicate the oppressed. Then, “the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling.” Everything is for you. And that is where your face is undivertedly to direct itself. Let your face be right fully turned to the one hill, and your back be right fully turned to the other hill.

But here, at this place, in chapter 12, you are at the very beginning of the epistle again. In chapter 2 we read: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?” Now we read: “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.” From the beginning to the end the Spirit is nailing your ear to the door of the house of the master of grace.

Then it very solemnly closes— “Our God is a consuming fire;” that is, the God of this dispensation. From the fires of Sinai there was a relief, by turning and taking refuge in Christ; but there is no relief if God’s relief is despised. If you turn away from the relief this dispensation brings in, there is no more relief. “Our God is a consuming fire.”

What, I ask you, puts you in company with God like simplicity of faith? As we said before, the purpose of the eternal counsels, and the joy of the Spirit, is this—to put crowns on the head of Christ; and when I am simple in faith, I am delighting to fill the field of my vision with these glories. Thus I am put in the most dignified company I could be in—God and the Holy Ghost. The Lord grant that you and I may be there! If we know these things, happy, thrice happy are we if we rest in them!

Chapter 13—We are closing the epistle, and we get what is common in all the epistles—some little details. It is eminently the structure of Paul’s epistles, to begin with doctrine, and close with exhortation. So it is here. “Let brotherly love continue.” Then, a brother may be a stranger: “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers.” And to encourage them to that duty they are reminded that some in their own history entertained angels unawares. Then, another duty— “Remember them that are in bonds,” and the encouragement follows— “as bound with them.” Take your place in the body of Christ as His prisoners, not prisoners corporeally, but mystically. When he speaks of suffering for Christ’s sake, he appeals to you in your mystic place; but when he speaks of suffering adversity (vs. 3) in a common, ordinary way, he appeals to natural life, “as being yourselves also in the body.”

Then we get the divine duties of purity and unworldliness. Unworldliness is expressed in the words: “Content with such things as ye have,” not seeking to be richer tomorrow than today. Then the Lord speaks in verse 5, and you answer Him in verse 6. It is the response of faith to grace—the reply of the heart of the believer to the heart of the Lord God. Then comes the duty of subjection— “Remember them which have the rule over you.” Not a blind following of them, as when they were heathen (1 Cor. 12:2) following dumb idols. Are you to be led blindfold? No; you are to be led intelligently. “No one calls Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” We are living people of a living temple. So it is, “considering the end of their conversation.” They died in faith, as they preached faith.

Now he leaves all that, and starts in verse 8 from another point; and this verse 8 may be called the motto of the epistle. Only in one light, I grant. What I mean is, that, as we have seen before, the Spirit of God in this epistle is looking at one thing after another—taking a passing glance at angels, at Moses, at Joshua, at Aaron, at the old covenant, at the altars with their victims, and setting every one of them aside to let in Christ. And you would not have it otherwise. With your whole heart and your whole soul you set your seal to that. Let all go to make room for Christ; and when Christ is brought in, do not let Him go for anything. This is what you get in verse 8. He is gazing for a moment at the object of the epistle. “I have displaced everything to let Him in, and now keep Him before you.” It is a most blessed peroration of the whole teaching of the epistle—We see in verse 16, another beautiful thing—another character of service for your altar, “To do good and to communicate forget not.” In various Scriptures we find, that the more joy we have in God, the more large-hearted we shall be to one another. It is the very character of joy to enlarge the heart. As in Nehemiah, chapter 8, where the prophet tells the people, “Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the

sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. And the people went their way to send portions and to make great mirth.” A man that is happy himself can afford to look round and make others happy with him. They bring neither profit nor honor to you. Suppose you accumulate carnal religious observances. If the 2nd of Colossians tells me there is no honor in them, this tells me there is no profit in them. When probed and searched out, they are all to the satisfaction of the flesh. The moment I get the Lord brought in, I get the heart established with grace. Did you ever hear it remarked, that not a single religion on earth takes grace as its secret, but the divine religion? It is keeping God quiet if you can with them all God’s religion is the only religion ever thought of, that takes grace for its basis. This is exactly contemplated here. Do not be carried about by doctrines foreign to Christ. “We have an altar.” What is the altar of this dispensation? It is an altar exclusively for burnt-offerings—eucharistic services. The Jews had an altar for expiatory sacrifice. We have no such altar. Christ has been on the altar of expiation, and now we, as priests, minister at an altar of eucharistic services. We remember that the Son of God has bled, and we serve at an altar where we know sin as canceled, blotted out, thrown behind the back; and there, at your altar, you are rendering a constant service of thanksgiving. But they that go back to the services of the tabernacle have no right, no competency to stand as priests at the altar of this dispensation. Many a loved and loving soul is struggling with a legal mind; but that is a very different thing from displacing Christ for anything, as the Galatians were doing, putting a crutch under Him. The Spirit in this epistle does not quarrel with the poor struggling soul; but if you are seeking to offer expiatory sacrifices, and not holding your altar jealously for eucharistic services, you are blaspheming the sacrifice of the Son of God.

Now, having put you at your altar, and also within the holiest, He shows you your place outside the camp. Jesus was accepted in the holiest by God, and He was put outside the camp by men. You are exactly to be with Christ in both these places. That is where this dispensation puts you; and if ever moral glory attached to a creature of God, it is that which attaches to you at this moment. Called outside the camp with Him, to bear His reproach! Are angels in such conditions? Did He ever say to them, “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations”? Angels are never invited to be the companions of His sorrow. He has never put such honor on angels as on you. Therefore, by and by, the church will be nearer the throne than angels. “Here we have no continuing city.” Christ had none. But further—

We see in verse 16, another beautiful thing—another character of service for your altar, “To do good and to communicate forget not.” In various Scriptures we find, that the more joy we have in God, the more large-hearted we shall be to one another. It is the very character of joy to enlarge the heart. As in Nehemiah, chapter 8, where the prophet tells the people, “Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. And the people went their way to send portions and to make great mirth.” A man that is happy himself can afford to look round and make others happy with him.

After this, the apostle comes to those who have present rule. Those in verse 7 are those who had died. Is this a blind subjection, I ask again? No; you are to take knowledge of them. “They watch for your souls.” Office without power, without the unction of the Holy Ghost, is a thing this dispensation does not know; and if we know it, we have got into the corrupt element of it, and out

of God's element. It is a part of your fidelity to God, to keep the dispensation in purity; and mere official authority is an idol.

This vessel of the Holy Ghost, this mightiest servant that ever served in God's name, comes down to the feeblest saint; "pray for us," and he asks it on the authority of a good conscience. Could you ask another to pray for you if you were purposing to err? I will answer for it—you could not. And here it is on the ground of a good conscience that the apostle asks prayer. Then he gives them a subject of prayer. Oh the familiarity of Scripture! You are not taken out of your own world of affections and sympathies. Then he breaks out into his doxology:

Now if we remember what we were saying to one another, we shall find here something new and strange. We get the Lord in this verse 20 in resurrection, not ascension. The great theme of the epistle is, as we have seen from the beginning hitherto, Christ displayed in heaven, but here the apostle does not go beyond resurrection. Why in closing does he bring down Christ from heaven? He has been keeping our eyes straining after Him into heaven, and just at the close, he brings Him down to earth. Yes—for it is very sweet to know that we need not travel beyond death and resurrection, to come in contact with the God of peace. You have reached the God of peace when you have reached the God of resurrection. Resurrection shows that death is abolished. Death is the wages of sin; and if death is abolished, sin is abolished, because death hangs on sin as the shadow on the substance. The covenant is called "everlasting," because it is never to be displaced. The old covenant was put away. The new covenant is ever new, never abrogated. The blood is as fresh this moment to speak peace to the conscience, as when it rent the veil. So, when we come to daily life, we are brought down to be in all simplicity in company with the God of peace that has raised the Great Shepherd from the dead by the blood that has sealed remission of sins forever. So you may forget sin. In one great sense we shall remember it forever, but as far as that which constitutes your condition before God, you may forget it forever. Then he prays that God may adjust and mold us to do His will. What poor adjustment there is in you and me, compared with that verse! We are awkward in our business, as if we were not at home in it. And then, at the last, he just closes by a few common words to the brethren. "Grace be with you all Amen."

Conclusion. —We may remember that I have observed several distinct lines of thought running through this epistle. In taking leave of it, we may consider it, and see how these various lines all meet in harmony, and give us, in result, a conclusion infinitely divine. The lines of thought are these:

1st. The Spirit is displacing one thing after another to let in Christ.

2nd. Having brought in Christ, the Spirit holds Him up in the varied glories in which He is now filling the heavens.

3rd. The Spirit shows how, Christ being brought in, He acts on everything to perfect it; that whatever a glorified Christ touches He perfects; and among other things, He perfects our consciences.

4th. This being so, on the ground of my reconciliation as a sinner, I am introduced to a temple of praise.

These four things may be looked at independently, yet it is very blessed to see that they acquire fresh glory when seen in connection one with another. Now, I do say, there is a magnificence in such a divine writing that needs nothing but itself to tell its glory. I am in contact with something that is infinitely the mind of God, with some of the most wondrous discoveries that God can make of Himself to me.

But 'ere we quit our sweet and happy task, we will look a little particularly at these four things. In chapters 1 and 2 the Spirit displaces angels to let in Christ. In chapters 3 and 4 He displaces Moses and Joshua. In chapters 5, 6 and 7 He displaces Aaron. In chapter 8 He displaces the old covenant with which Christ has nothing to do. In chapter 9 He displaces the ordinances of the old sanctuary, with its altars and services, to let in the altar where Jesus as the Lamb of God lay. One thing after another He takes up and sets aside to make room for Jesus. This is a delightful task to the Spirit. God knows His own delights. If the Spirit can be grieved He can be delighted too. Then, having brought Christ in, what does He do with Him? He keeps Him in forever. Christ has no successor. When the Spirit has got Him in He gazes at Him. And what is it to be spiritual? It is to have the mind of the Holy Ghost. Have you ever delighted to get out of the house, to make room for Jesus? Indignantly the Spirit talks of the things we have been looking at, as "beggary elements." Have you ever treated them so? The Spirit sees no successor to Christ. In the counsels of God, there is none after Him! Is it so in the counsels and thoughts of our souls?

So, having kept Him in, He gazes at Him. And what does He see in Him? He sees glory upon glory. In chapter 1 He sees Him seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as the Purger of our sins, and hears a voice, saying, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." He looks in chapter 2 and sees Him as our Apostle talking to us of salvation. Then He finds Him as the Owner of an abiding house, as the Giver of eternal rest, and sees Him in the sanctuary above seated there with an oath, and hears God uttering the salutation, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." In these various ways the Spirit delights in Christ. Then, in chapter 9, we see Him looked at in the heavens as the Bestower of the eternal inheritance, having first obtained eternal redemption. In chapter 10 we see Him seated there in another character, with this voice saluting Him, "Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thy foes Thy footstool." Have you ever in spirit followed Christ up to heaven, and heard these voices addressing Him We want to give personality to the truth. We are terribly apt to deal with it as mere dogma. I dread having it before me as a thing I could intellectually learn. In this epistle, it is the person that is kept before you; it is a living one you have to do with. These are heavenly realities. Moses pitched a temple in the wilderness. Solomon pitched a temple in the land; God has pitched a temple in heaven. And oh, how it shows what an interest God. has in the sinner, when for our priest He has built a sanctuary, and that because He is our priest, and about to transact our interests. Then, in chapter 12, when He had ascended, He was received and seated in heaven as the Author and Finisher of faith.

That is the second line, and we see how it hangs on the first. The Spirit, having fixed Christ before us, displays Him to us.

The third thing we get in this epistle is perfection. If I get Christ perfect as Savior, I get myself perfect as saved. If I am not saved, Christ is not a Savior. I am not speaking now of a feeble mind struggling with legality, but of my title; and I have no more doubt that I have a right to look on myself as a saved sinner, than that Christ has a right to look on Himself as a perfect Savior.

Salvation is a relative thing. If I take myself as a sinner to Christ, and doubt that I am saved, I must have some doubt of the perfection of His Savior-character. But we have already looked at the epistle as a treatise on perfection. It became God to give me none less than a perfect Savior. Wondrous! He has linked His glory with the perfection of my conscience before Him! He has condescended to let me know that it became Him! Does it become you to come and serve me in some capacity? You might do it through kindness, but I should not think of saying so. Yet that is the language God uses.

So then, in the third place, we find the epistle a treatise on perfection. Not, however, the perfection of millennial days.

Christ will be the repairer of every breach. But the greatest breach of all was in the conscience of the sinner. There is mischief and confusion abroad in creation still. There is mischief abroad in the house of Israel. Christ has not yet set to His hand to repair that. There is a breach in the throne of David—Christ has not yet applied Himself to heal that. But the mightiest breach of all was between you and God. By and by He will turn the groans of creation into the praises of creation; but He has begun His character as a repairer, by applying Himself to repair the breach that separated you from God; and now we have boldness to enter into the holiest.

And then, in the fourth place, we find in this epistle the Spirit doing nothing less now than building a temple for praise. Is He about to tack up the vail again, which the blood of the Lamb of God has torn in two? Is He going to revive the things that He has indignantly talked of as “beggarly elements”? Unspeakably glorious is this fourth and last thing. The Spirit of God has built a temple for you to praise Him; the fruit of your lips giving thanks to His name. What have we not in this epistle! Though we may look on each line of thought independently, yet they do lend to each other exquisite and increased glory. The Spirit is, as it were, making a whip of small cords, and telling all to be gone, to make room for Jesus. Of course I know they were willing to go. John the Baptist uttered the voices of them all, when he said, “He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom: but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” Moses, Aaron, angels, all were delighted to be put out of the house for Christ.

These things are combinedly serving your soul by introducing you to deeper apprehensions of the Christ of God. What a servant to our souls the Holy Ghost is in this dispensation!—as the Lord Jesus was a servant from the manger to Calvary.

I believe we each need individually to be fortified with truth. We do not know how far Romanizing and infidel errors may be getting ahead. If we have not the truth, we may be the sport of Satan tomorrow. I will give you an instance of it. The Galatians were an earnest, excited people (and I do not quarrel with revival excitement); they would have plucked out their eyes for the apostle; but the day came, when he had to begin afresh with them from the very beginning. “My little children, of whom I travail in birth till Christ be formed in you!” There was excitement without a foundation of truth; and, when mischief came in, the poor Galatians were next door to shipwreck—and this epistle is a witness to the same thing. The Hebrew saints were unskillful in the word. But we must be fortified by truth. A state of quickening wants the strengthening of the truth of God.

And now what shall we say Oh the depth of the riches! Oh the height of the glory! the profoundness of the grace! the wonder of the wonders! God unfolding Himself in such a way that we may well cover our faces, while we trust Him in silence, and love Him with the deepest emotions of our souls! But some of us can surely say, "My leanness, my leanness!"

The Quiet Mind

I have a treasure which I prize,
Its like I cannot find;
There's nothing like it on the earth—
'Tis this, a QUIET MIND.
But 'tis not that I'm stupefied,
Or senseless, dull, or blind;
'Tis God's own peace within my heart,
Which forms my QUIET MIND.
I found this treasure at the cross,
'Tis there, to every kind
Of heavy laden, weary souls,
Christ gives a QUIET MIND.
My Savior's death and risen life,
To give this were design'd;
And that's the root, and that's the branch,
Of this my QUIET MIND.
The love of God within my breast,
My heart to His doth bind;
This is the mind of heaven on earth—
This is my QUIET MIND.
I've many a cross to take up now,
And many left behind;
But present troubles move me not,
NOT shake my QUIET MIND.
I'm waiting now to see the Lord,
Who's been to me so kind;

I want to thank Him face to face,
For this my QUIET MIND.

Death Is Ours

“All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” (1 Cor. 3:21-23)

A friend lately used to me this expression: “Death is a terrible monster; I hate it.” My soul replied: “What and where should I be, but for that terrible monster of your hate.” Death is mine in the highest sense; not merely in the lower sense, that, as it is appointed unto men once to die, I may have to die; but, in the highest sense, Death is mine; for death itself, in the divine use of it—in the way God has used it, has been, and is marvelously mine, my own: my boast and my song.

And to what can I turn first, when speaking on this subject, so well as to the blessed Lord’s death? “The Lord’s death” (1 Cor. 11:26); “the death of God’s Son” (Rom. 5:10); the death of “the Prince of Life” (Acts 3:15); are expressions that may well usher in the wondrous roll. “I am the resurrection and the life,” said the Lord. But He could not in His own person be the resurrection without death first; nor, according to divine counsels, was He to take openly the place of being the life, the last Adam, the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15), without first dying. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” (John 12:24) “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me; but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.” (John 10:17,18) And all through His course He could say, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” (Luke 12:50) For the goal of His course who had come as Son of God down from the divine glory as displayed in heaven above, to become the Son of Man here on earth, was “death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:8,9) Marvel of marvels, and wonder inexplicable to human reason! The Son of God—He who created all things, and upheld all things, the appointed Judge of quick and dead—was, as Son of Man, crucified through weakness! (2 Cor. 13:4). And never did His divine glory shine out more brightly than then. A creature, however high, has no right to leave the sphere assigned to it—its own proper sphere. The Son of God had no such restraint upon Him. He had the right to be worshipped in the heavens, and the right, if He would, to be hanged as the Son of Man on the cross. Creature-glory consists in honor put upon it. Divine glory showed itself here in His divesting Himself of all external glory as attached to sphere or place, emptying Himself that He might show the perfect expression of sympathy with His Father’s mind. He was one counsel with Him He would show it in death, the death of the cross. And death, the wages of sin to Adam the first, was, in the case of the last Adam, the Son’s payment (in love, how free!) of tribute to divine counsels, the expression of the perfect sympathy of the Son of God as Son of Man with the Father’s vindication of His own character against the world and Satan, and the whole fallen human race. That cross on Calvary issuing hereafter in the all-pervading glory of the Lamb that was slain, alive and at God’s right hand—shows (blessed Lord!) death, death in its most awfully-magnified expression, even Thy death, to be mine, my very own, my boast, my glory. If none other claim it, yet do I: monstrous, but not terrible; nor to be hated, for it was Thy death.

2ndly. But I must remark, further, that it was thus that the glory of God, as the God of resurrection, was brought out to light. Eden, with man in innocency, proclaimed the eternal power and godhead; and after the deluge, in the rainbow covenant, the sign of the long-suffering patience of God to a world in wickedness, came out to light. But Eden and innocency I have lost; and mercies to me as a sinner in time will not answer the question of sin, nor save me from the wrath to come. But the death of the Lord Jesus was the lowly portal through which flowed forth the light of the glory of God as the God of resurrection, and of a resurrection from among the dead. 1st. He that died became Lord of all, in the wide universe; and should sit upon the throne judging, in God's own proper eternity, all men, raised again at the general resurrection. That glory is certainly His as Son of Man. "For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28,29) Awful thought, to be brought up by the irresistible power of the Lord to answer for all deeds and thoughts done in the body, in this life. But, 2ndly, blessed be God, if the light of the great white throne is seen, we know also that there is in Him, who will sit thereon and judge, also a first resurrection. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead [morally dead in trespasses and sins] shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." (Ver. 24-26) Save as a result of His death, it never could have been written: "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. 9:27,28) And the unfolded results, in circumstances, of that lowly death, are the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness—for which we, according to His promise, wait. (2 Peter 3:13)

God raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. (Rom. 4:24) "By Him we believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory that our faith and hope might be in God." (1 Peter 1:21) Oh what should I be, or where should I be, as to salvation, as to trust for present deliverance, as to hope, if the glory of God, as the God of resurrection, had not been brought out to light? and how has it been brought forth to light, but by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from among the dead? the fruits of His death, how precious! 3rdly. But not only is there light, the light of life, found in His death; but, more than that, this light, so found, is a light in which all the dark things get exposed, their true character discovered, their power neutralized; Satan, the world, man, all are made manifest by the death of the Lord Jesus; and their power set aside, too, to faith. It was thus Satan was met, nullified, and his power set aside: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. 2:14,15)

It was His death to which the Lord referred when He said, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John 12:31) And this world, has its judgment in that same death: "Now is the judgment of this world," judgment made good in the blessing, too, of the believe; as Paul said, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." (Gal. 6:14) It is there, too, that flesh, with the life that is in the blood,

gets its measure and true stamp. When He gave up His life a ransom for us, He showed the perfection of flesh and the vileness of flesh in one and the same act. In Himself, He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sin. Justice could find nothing in Him to find fault with; He was the only one that could not justly be forsaken, on account of what He Himself was. In Him all was perfect. He could bear our sins in His own body on the tree. But in that which He underwent on the cross, in death, there was the expression, from men who did it, of their being at enmity with God and under the power of Satan and also, in the forsaking of Him by God at the same time, there was God's measured estimate of our sin. The just One—substitute for the many unjust—took the cup of wrath at the Father's hands—and, in crying out, "My God, My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" gave the true measure, divinely full and perfect, of what fallen man is in the estimate of God. With mine eye on Him I cannot say, "Death is a terrible monster. I hate it." His death—death in the fullest expression of it—death as He only could present it, is most precious and marvelous. God is a God of wonders. And to wonder at Him well becomes a creature in His presence. I wonder at Him; yea, am lost in wonder when I think of death, the Lord's death; open cleft through which all the glory of the God of resurrection has poured; has streamed down upon flesh, the world, and Satan, and made me, even me, to be able to say, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." 4thly. But if the springtide of death—death in itself—there, where it is worst, and has told forth its awful power, between God and the Son of Man as the substitute, told its tale in a way that leaves the believer blessed in the hearing of it, yet conscious that there is an eternal, a divine height and depth in the subject which passeth all understanding; what shall we say as to the waves or the ripples of death? Surely faith says, "In all things more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Rom. 8:37) I am Christ's, and Christ is God's. Sheltered in the rock that was smitten, the dark shadow of death is not to rest upon me, upon my conscience, upon my thoughts—

Christ died! then I am clean:

"Not a spot within."

God's mercy and love!

"Not a cloud above."

'Tis the spirit, through faith, thus triumphs o'er sin:

"Not a cloud above. Not a spot within."

The Son, now upon the Father's throne in the glory which He had with Him before the world was—eternal, without beginning—has made me, through His death, as free from all the guilt that did rest upon me as He Himself was always personally free from guilt. God had never anything against Him; He has now, through that death, nothing against me. He always found His good pleasure in the Son of His love. Wondrous, but true, He even now finds His good pleasure in me in that Christ.

I count myself His purchase, put apart by Him for His own glory. He took occasion of the circumstances of the fall to bring out the compassion and mercy and grace of God, and showed, amid the ruins of the first creation, His own competency to deal with God about the, question of sin and Satan, of the fallen world, and of man. His work of humiliation is ended; but how does it all tell

of His personal competency to meet every question?

Gone on high now, He uses our position in the wilderness that lies between an Egyptian world of bondage and the glory as the occasion to teach us Himself and to teach us our own selves too. And shortly, when it is glory come, He will Himself put the finishing touch to the work, and show out the faithfulness of His love to the people of His choice; and this He will do at least a thousand years before the new creation shall be put forth as the expression of His competency to that which He takes in hand. And to what am I set aside individually but to be an occasion in which, according to divine wisdom, the personal glories of the Son as being the Resurrection and the Life are to find their expression? He has given me life, eternal life, a life which He Himself is, as He is in resurrection and ascension glory. (Col. 3:4)

If, ere He rises up from the Father's right hand, He call me, I die—but I know that the "I die" means only "to all that is mortal," to all that is corruptible down here—cease forever, and according to God, to have connection with any such things as mortality or corruptibility; and, absent from the body, am present with the Lord—there to await, with Himself that time, when He shall put forth His glory as the resurrection—openly put it forth; and my body shall then rise a glorified body to meet Him in the air. (1 Thess. 4:17)

If He calls me not until He has risen up, then I shall never see separation of body and soul at all; but His life-giving power, which has already given to my soul a life in the power of which I could cast off a body of death, shall fill all up with life, and push mortality and corruptibility out of my body, without its ever being separated from the already life-possessed soul. But is absence from pilgrim scenes and from a body of sin—if changed for presence with the Lord, and being "at home"—is this death? Unbelief speaks oft as if it were so; just as if the new place Christ has opened, in which it is far better to be, so far as we are concerned, were little—as though the curtained character of the intermediate state of which Hezekiah spake (Isa. 38) still continued, now that light and immortality have been brought to light through the gospel.

With a conscience set free by faith in a risen and ascended Lord, and with the flow of, joy which the unrieved Spirit of God gives to a heavenly man who is a son of God, What is the fever of disease? What the clammy feel of the body when its life is flickering in the socket?—the eternal life within centering the heart and mind the meanwhile upon the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself on high. Yes; but there is a coffin before us, and there rests the body of an aged and devoted saint, happy in the Lord among us and: full of love to His saints, and now gone! Ay, but gone whither? To the Lord Jesus, Is He not worthy to have His saints with Him"! Has He, think you, forestalled God's counsel in calling this one "home," home to Himself—Himself the "Home"? Not so. The words, "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I," may be quoted here as true in this case also. Or have we no love for those that go? no love save for our own selves? no willingness to see them blessed, if their blessing cost us any privation. It is vile, wretched selfishness, which forgets God's joy and Christ's joy in welcoming to His presence a soul that leaves us; which hinders, too, our thinking of its great gain, and keeps us absorbed with our own selves and our loss. Well may you who, thus full of your own selves, forget God and Christ and the friends you profess to have loved—well may you be indignant against your own selfishness and your own narrow-hearted love of self! But there is a jealousy of love in God. He wills that your hearts should know the sufficiency of Christ to satisfy

you amid all the writhings experienced in the wilderness. He wills, in that jealousy of love, that you should think of Him to whom He has espoused you, and of His joy over those that sleep in Him, and that you should learn how to think and feel according to that sphere in which Christ is now as its very center.

What can I tell you about the blessedness of the departed? I can only answer this by another question: What do you know of the attractiveness of Christ; of the blessedness of being with the Lord? For if self and selfishness fill you, why then they find their aliment in this world; and if you are full of yourself, of your likes and dislikes, your gains and your losses, you will not profit much from the doctrine of the blessedness of those absent from the body and present with the Lord. It does not suit you in your selfishness, and you may not like to be challenged as to whether you find more attractiveness in Christ than in all else. "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," was the Lord's blessed word to the converted thief. What did the poor thief know of paradise or its blessedness? Probably nothing at all. But he had just made a new friend in One whose fellow there was not to be found. Faith had revealed to him the open and attracting heart of the blessed Lord. Faith had opened his heart to holiness and to confession, and to trust in his Judge, and had drawn into it the sweetness of the promises, of inseparableness from that Savior: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43) "With Him:" that was enough. "Absent from the body, and present (at home) with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8), was the far better which Paul knew as to the state of a departed saint.

Man's Responsibility and God's Promises

There are two great points in this chapter:

1st. The effect of the law, when any one is under it;

2ndly. The contrast between law and promise, and whether it be by law or by promise that the blessing of the inheritance is ours.

In the early part of the chapter (I do not, speak now of the first two or three verses) we are told that the effect of being under the law is to be "under the curse;" in the latter part we find the blessings of the inheritance ours, not by law, but by promise. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Thus are the counsels of God brought out, and that in a manner that applies itself to the constant tendency of the human heart and its actings, which ever go to exalt man, and to debase God.

It is singular the way in which the human heart is continually reasoning within itself, as if there were no distinct revelation from God of His mind-searching and inquiring in order that it may conclude something about itself and God. Now it is quite true that the power of grace must work, in order that this revelation should be understood, but it is not merely in the unconverted man there is this reasoning. Alas! he often reasons not at all about it, but goes on in his own way, careless, reckless, and unconcerned. In the heart of the saints there is constant reasoning with regard to their standing before God, and in all such cases it is quite plain that faith is not in exercise. Whenever I begin to reason on the state of my own soul, faith is not in exercise. I do not say that the person is not a believer, but I say, faith is not in exercise. That is quite evident. Faith receives the testimony of God, and does not reason about it. There the difficulty lies. It is not that revelation is not plain, but that the heart of man is not subdued.

It is not a proof that faith is in exercise when I do not judge myself, because, when I judge myself, I judge myself before the Lord, in order to have removed whatever may be found within me that is wrong in His sight. Grace enables me to do this. But whenever there is any reasoning from myself as to my condition, faith is not in exercise. It is true this reasoning may follow upon belief in testimony (be, in that sense, a consequence of faith), but it is not faith. That is, I may believe there is a judgment to come, and that Christ can be my only Savior (seeing there is not salvation in another, for "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"), and I may set about reasoning as to what will be my portion, whether I can say that Christ is my Savior; but that is not in itself any right exercise of faith.

We shall find the testimony of the word of God to be most simple. Yet wherever the natural conscience is awakened, there is a certain sense of responsibility to God (indeed that is, in a sense, the awakening of it), the knowledge that God takes notice of all that is going on, of what we do, and the like, and that there is a judgment to come. Therefore, the moment a man's conscience is so awakened (the grace of God not being known), he begins to inquire whether his conduct is such as God can approve and accept; and thence he draws some inference as to his own future

happiness or misery. This is the natural state of man, of every man that thinks about the matter. But it is, alas! the real condition too of multitudes of believers in Christ, and of those even who have once known redemption largely. There is a constant tendency in the heart to turn again to self, to a condition in which man stands responsible to God. It is always the case when the soul has got out of the power of the testimony of the Spirit of God as to the completeness of redemption; as also when we have not come to a distinct knowledge of the hopelessness of our condition before God as man. I say to a distinct knowledge; that is, when the soul has not estimated truthfully the hopelessness of its case, that in the flesh good does not dwell, and become fully satisfied that everything—all the practical righteousness, holiness, or graciousness of the saint—is consequent upon the introduction of that new thing created in us by the power of God, because of union with Jesus risen.

We get in these Galatians an example of this, where the soul, after having had the knowledge of grace—Jesus Christ “evidently set forth crucified amongst them”—went back. They had “begun in the Spirit,” and they now thought “in the flesh” to add to what Christ had done. That is, that they could, by that which is in man, and of man—the old man, too, add to that which is of the new man, Christ. And that, I repeat, beloved, is the constant tendency of the heart. Wherever there is not the distinct knowledge of the hopelessness of man’s condition before God, we go back to get from man something which may be added to what God has given us in the Lord Jesus Christ. John says, “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” Now if we do not know that the flesh cannot come in in any way and take a share or part in it, we are constantly adding and connecting something of the flesh.

God began by giving “promise.” And here there was nothing at all of man. But, because (as we shall see more especially in the latter part of the chapter where the apostle speaks about promise from God—promise coming from Him when there was nothing in man to call it out, except indeed the ruin and need of man) when He had given the promise, before He had completed that which He had promised—redemption—before the relation of Christ, He knew the constant tendency of the human heart to seek to satisfy its own feeling of responsibility, God gave the full extent of His demand upon it, with the consequence of failure. Because, I say, He knew what was in the heart of man, its tendency from the first—natural tendency (that is, until redemption and grace are fully known) to judge about itself by itself, as to its future state, and also the pride of man which supposes something in man which can be brought to God, or something from man which can be done for God, before He did anything for the accomplishment of His promise, He brought in the law, thus trying man, in responsibility, to the utmost.

It is quite right, most assuredly, to be what God has required in His revealed will. God has required and demanded a certain amount of good in me, and I have the plain revelation of God about it. Therefore, I cannot act as if there were no revelation. It is one of the sins of the heart of man, that of “intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,” thinking he can approach God by some means of his own devising. God requires something that is not merely the work of man’s hands, something real in the soul, something which has to do with man’s relationship to Himself, and to his fellow creature. There is this in the law, the direct requirement of God from man of what man ought to be towards God and before Him. That is one way to take up the law. And further, there is the prohibition of what sin had brought in.

There are these two things; first, what God requires positively of man, expressed in the summary given by our Lord: "Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" and then, as the other part, the prohibition of what man was indulging in. The law presented the requirements of God, that is supposing man was right practically before God, and took cognizance of what man was not, and prohibited it. And that is all the law did; except indeed to pronounce the curse, if there were failure in the things required.

Now, as soon as this is tried—the moment we get here, and see the law in this light—we find man at once brought in, completely hopeless and helpless. And for this very reason, that he has done the things God forbids. He is "ungodly." But not only so—he is, moreover, "without strength." This is his condition naturally, and the moment there is real desire, and the endeavor to serve God according to the law, it is found out. Supposing he desires (which I assume, and grace produces it) to serve God, and not do anything forbidden in the law, he discovers the very principle of his nature to be all wrong. There is "a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members;" which has selfishness for its basis, and corruption for its object. It is in himself. Hence the reason that we so often find persons crying out, "O wretched man that I am!" Moreover, when he comes to see what is in himself, it is that which brings him down into despair. It is not his past sins, he could easily suppose God might forgive them; nay, perhaps, that they are forgiven, put away when he was first converted. The trial is not there. But when he feels the principle of those sins to be in himself—the principle that produced them there still, and working in him, now that he lives and "delights in the law of God after the inner man"—it is this which casts him down. And cast down he remains until he apprehends the ministry of grace.

Now, beloved friends, you see God has given law for the prohibition of evil. And, taking it in that point of view, He gave it to man already in sin. It came in after two things, evil and the promise. It was a thing "added because of transgressions until the seed should come to whom the promise was made" (vs. 19); neither the original condition of man, nor the purpose of God about man. It "came in," it is said (though its elements, no doubt, are everlasting and eternal truth), "by the bye," added because of transgression. "The law entered, that the offense might abound." (Rom. 5:20) Hence we are taught that its object was to make plain and evident—to discover that perverseness of the will of man, which would never otherwise have been discovered—the inclination where there is the knowledge of good, and the desire after good, to do evil; and, therefore, the hopelessness of man's case before God. Man is concluded under sin. (vs. 22) That is the effect of the law.

It was quite clear that man delighted in sin. Natural conscience sufficed to show there was sin and guilt. But then the law came in and was added to that, "that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." (Rom. 3:19)

What is said here? "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." (vs. 10) Mark the force of that expression. It is not as many as are living in sin, neither yet merely as many as have broken the law (though that is the reason of it); but, "as many as are of the works of the law." How universal the statement! It is quite true that man is under "the curse of the law," because he has been the breaker of the law; but it is all who are of the works of the law who are under that curse. The law was not given to prohibit lust, until man was a willful creature, a being in whom lust was

found, until after sin had entered. I am not now speaking of the law respecting Adam's not eating the fruit, but of the law given by Moses. (vs. 19) Coming in at that time, it pronounced the curse upon every one "not continuing in all things that were written in the book of the law to do them." It took this ground. And even the very notice in the Scripture before us is remarkable. The apostle says, "for it is written" (vs. 19), that is quoting Deuteronomy, where we find (chap. 27) that six tribes were to stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, and six upon mount Ebal to curse. But where the details are entered into, there are no tribes mentioned for blessing—the blessing is not heard at all, it is only the curse.

Again: "the law entered that the offense might abound" (not that sin might abound: God could not do anything that sin might abound), that is, that the sin already in man's nature might become positively and definitely "transgression." The law did not produce sin, it only manifested it. Let us look at what the apostle says in Romans 7 "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good." Again, we read in another place (I merely quote it now as regards its application to this part of the subject), "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." (1 Cor. 15:56) Directly the law bent down on the conscience, it proved man to be altogether wrong. Every thought that man had was detected, and the will refusing to submit, its acts became transgression, so that sin by the commandment became "exceeding sinful." It produced, moreover, a great deal more lust in the heart than there was before.

We all know this to be the case. There is a familiar illustration of it constantly seen in our own houses. Request your children not to do a certain thing—let it be only not to look into a box (no matter what), and you find that they all long to look into it. So is it with grown-up persons, they will perversely wish for the forbidden thing, and, what is more, though they may be ashamed of it—ashamed of the expression of it before men, the inclination is so great, that, if they could but do it and not be seen, they would not be satisfied until they had. Just so with the law.

And now, beloved friends, if that is what the law is, if all who are "of the works of the law are under the curse"—is that the law for me, to have a righteousness through, in the sight of God? Never; because the law acts on a nature which is already evil, and, therefore, it can do nothing but lead to the righteous judgment of God against all that is brought out in and from that nature.

What more could God do? (it is not the subject of this chapter, but I would just advert to it) what more than give right directions, a revelation of what He required from man? There is another thing that He has done. He sent light into the world. This is something added, as it were, to the requirements of the law. The law cursed, but here (in Christ) was life showing light to all around, and that man hated, because it proved his deeds to be evil. It was the adaptation of light to every possible state in which man's nature could move. I am not speaking of communicating life, but take man in any condition, and he is without excuse.

Well, beloved, this is the effect of the law as revealed from God. It took up fallen man, with the knowledge of good and evil, and did not touch the power he had to meet its requirements, and therefore, necessarily, it brought the curse. The apostle reasons: "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin." (vss. 21, 22) Mark that word "all;" it leaves out none. It might be said, "If you go and take a man without the ordinances of God, and put him under the law, the effect is known; but there are helps and ordinances; put a man, with them, under the law, and he can get life." That was precisely Israel's case. It pleased God to test, in Israel, whether man could get the promises, if under the law, with ordinances. It has been proved to the contrary. God says (Ex. 19), "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." It was not until He had ransomed them out of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness as His "people," that he gave them the law—not until He had brought them unto Himself. Then He says by Moses the mediator, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed..." (vs. 5). And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." The law was given on this ground. Then commenced the trial. And what was the consequence? Failure.

"The Scripture has concluded all under sin." And that is what the gospel more fully brought out. The gospel supposes it. Man, no matter what you call him—a heathen, a Jew, or a Christian, with every ordinance you please—is man, and the law deals to man the "curse." Man should be what man is not, and therefore that is what the law of God must do, did. If God gives a law, can He give that law to suit sinners or Himself? Is God to come down to give the requirements such as would suit the sinner as a sinner? and, if so, what sinner? Where would you draw the line to a heathen, who is corrupt in all his thoughts? to a Jew, who looks merely to outward things? Where can I find a man to whom I might adapt the law, if it is not to be what God requires? If God gives a law to sinners, He must give the full demand of His holiness. That is what the conscience of man recognizes as fitting. There can be no intercourse between God and the sinner, on the ground of what God requires, without His either sanctioning or condemning sin. Sanction it He cannot; therefore and necessarily all He has to do is to condemn. Law can never go beyond that. No matter what man is called, God deals with man as he really is.

And now, what does the apostle put in the stead of law here? "Promise." There he rests the hope of the soul. "Promise" was long before the law. All hangs upon the faithfulness of God. This is the reasoning. A mediator supposed two parties, God and man, and therefore failure, as it depended on the stability of both. Not so promise, as it depends on the stability of God only. "God is one."

If I make you an unconditional promise, a simple promise today, I have no right to say to you on the morrow, Oh, you did not so and so, and therefore the promise is nullified. Certainly not. No! (you would reply) you promised me the thing unconditionally, not if I behaved well or ill, and therefore it is mine.

These "promises" were made after sin came in, yet before the giving of the law. Sin came in before ever "promise" was heard of. When Adam had failed in the garden, before anything was said to Adam of the foulest sin in his mind, after he had said, "the woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (he had not only committed sin in disobeying God's command, but he had dared to reproach God); before anything was said of that, as soon as the

evil was traced up to its source, God in pronouncing sentence on the serpent, as the author of it, gave “promise.” But He did not give “promise” to Adam in sin, to man in that condition (now the law was given to man in that condition), but in the SECOND Adam. Before there was the slightest dealing on the ground of responsibility, “promise” was made in Christ, as the NEW Man, the “Seed of the woman.” Not a word of it was spoken to Adam personally, yet it was that on which his soul might rest, on which faith could lay hold.

Well, before the New Man came, before He was revealed, the law was given to show the effect and consequence of man’s being under responsibility. “The law was added (came in by the bye) because of transgressions, until the seed shall come to whom, the promise was made.”

“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman (the seed came), made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

But there was another step then, which was this, the promises made to Abraham and his seed (vs. 16) were confirmed of God in Christ. When Isaac had been offered up (in figure), and raised (in figure), God spake and said, “By myself have I sworn, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee,.... and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 22) Now Isaac was not the true “seed.” Christ, the true “seed,” was typified by Isaac, in whose offering the promise was confirmed. “He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” (vs. 16) The promises settled on Isaac, after (in figure) he had died and risen again from the dead; and that is what the grace of God has done for us, in Christ. Christ came here and lived, accomplishing in the face of Satan all that the spiritual Man could offer to God in his life. But, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. Though Christ Himself, as Man, might have had the promises, yet he could not have taken anything with us, except through death, in resurrection. He could not have had connection with man in the Old Adam. Well, He dies, and having accomplished the work of redemption, done everything, set aside the consequences of responsibility for man, as risen from the dead, in the power of a new and endless life— “THE Seed” to whom the promises were made—He takes up these promises.

As man, we were under responsibility, and therefore under the curse, for we had sinned. Yes, though through grace, able to say that we are “heirs according to the promises,” we had sinned. There was no difference in this respect between ourselves and any poor Jew or Gentile, we were all “by nature children of wrath, even as others;” “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” (Eph. 2:3) The state of soul was the same. Perverseness of will was there, the determination to do our own will, and the pleasure of doing it, instead of the will of God.

Christ took all this upon Himself. He charged Himself with responsibility, instead of putting man under it. He underwent to the full the last effect of sin, as the result of the wrath of God, and of the power of Satan, as well as of the weakness of man. He bore the curse. He went down into the grave. But He was still the “Holy One,” and (though He might imputatively take sin), it was not possible that He could be holden of the cords of death. Therefore He rose again—HEAD of a new family of men, a new world, a new creation—HEIR according to the purposes of God, of all the promises, and Heir forever.

He has accomplished everything, all that was needed for the remission of our sins, and besides that broken the power of Satan, under which man lay in the very seat of that power. "Through death He has destroyed him that had the power of death." (Heb. 2) Most blessed truth! Christ has put Himself into the condition of man in death, the last stronghold in which Satan held man captive by the judgment, and under the sentence of God Himself. He rose out of it, and became the source of life, and heir for us of all the promises. Grace has found its way into death, and "out of the eater" has brought forth sweetness.

If we look at death—the Prince of Life has tasted death. If at the power of Satan—Christ has broken and destroyed his power. If at the wrath of God—He has borne it all, drunk the cup to the very dregs. "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me." "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves."

But further, He is the righteous. Inheritor of all the promises; as it is said, "All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen," and we through grace can add, "to the glory of God by us."

How then did we come in? As heirs together with Him in life, united to Him, one with Him. Our standing before God is in Christ, the New Man, as having no more part in the flesh, though we have as yet to struggle against it. Death is abolished. Life and incorruptibility are brought to light by the gospel; and that because the responsibility question has been settled in the death of Christ.

But it is "by faith." How blessed this! How true of God! How blessed for us! By faith we receive all the promises in Christ. By faith we find everything done. It is only to believe. Faith produces all manner of fruit in us, there is wondrous power in it, but still it is only to believe, that is all. Just as though you had been deeply in debt, and some kind friend had paid the amount, and when that was done had sent you word. The person comes and tells you that your debts are paid, and you believe it. Now your believing produces joy and gladness doubtless in your heart, but of course it does not in any measure go to liquidate the debt. So as to salvation. The debt has been paid, Christ has finished the work, and the believing soul enters into all the blessed results. (vs. 22) Faith is exercised upon that which has been already accomplished. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace, that the promise might be true to all the seed." Nothing redounds to the glory of the creature. It is a person simply depending upon the truth of God.

When the soul is made hopeless in itself (and this must always be the case when the conscience is really honest under the sense of responsibility), it turns to see what God is. The more the truth of God's requirements is known, the more wretched that soul becomes. The end of all is seen in that exclamation of the apostle, "O wretched man..." I am a man, and therefore a wretched being, one having the curse resting upon me.

God in the gospel sees man wicked, miserable, rebellious, lost; but He sees him according to His infinite compassions. The Lord Jesus has begun altogether a new thing, not demanding what man is required to be before God, but accomplishing what God is towards man—grace. We find in Christ, it is true, and to perfection, what man is required to be before God; but more than that, what God is towards man. Grace came by Jesus Christ. So that the moment any person, let it be a convicted sinner, stood before Christ as what he was, he found Christ to be grace. If he came as what he was not, Christ laid him bare; but if he came as what he was, then, no matter what he

was, a poor helpless sinner, a wretched adulteress, or the thief upon the cross (that was not the question—the question was, What was Christ? Christ came not to judge, but to save), all was grace.

Having found Christ, we have found one who has all the promises of God. And since He took those promises as a consequence of what He had done in putting away sin, there can be no further question about sin before God. Our sins are necessarily left outside, because Christ Himself has borne them all, as it is said, “The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” He stood in our place, and took upon Himself our iniquity, and bore the judgment due to us; went down into the grave, but rose again from the dead in the power of a new and endless life; ascended up on high, even unto the Father’s presence, as our representative. There He stands; we stand there in Him. As He is before God, so are we, holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in His sight, partakers of His life, joint-heirs with Him of all the promises.

This, beloved friends, is our position before God, this our standing in Christ. There is an entirely new Headship in the Second Adam. We are presented in a new character to God, such as man never had before—man without sin in the very presence of God, the very pattern of God’s mind and delight. We find difficulty, it may be, in apprehending it, because of the weakness of the flesh. The moment I look at myself I have another man full of failure. But I stand there as having had sin forever put away. The knowledge of this gives peace, and we worship. Make sin what you please, let it take what form it may, you cannot mingle the state of man under law with the condition of the new, the heavenly man in heaven.

The Lord grant us to know what we are in His love. (1 Cor. 1:30; Heb. 10:14)

Esther

“The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honor is humility.” –Proverbs 15:33.

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” –Proverbs 16:18.

Suffering first, and then glory, mark the due path or history of the saint. This has been illustrated from old time. Joseph, Moses, and David may be remembered in connection with this truth. But it is the common history, in a great moral sense the necessary history, of those who adhere to God, in a system or world that has departed from Him, and set up its own thoughts. For such must ever be stemming a contrary current.

But there is more than this. The moment of deepest depression has commonly been the eve of deliverance.

In Egypt, the burdens of the Israelites had grown to their highest, just when the Lord was preparing Moses’s deliverance for them. In the ministry of the Lord, just as He was bringing redemption, the devil would commonly throw his poor captive in the midst, or cause him to cry out under a still sorer affliction. Our own souls are led to Jesus and salvation by a light, which has discovered to us our full moral ruin and degradation; and in the latter day, when Israel’s “strength is gone,” and “there is none shut up or left,” and the enemy is coming in like a flood, then the Spirit of the Lord will lift up His standard. “For the hour of preparation, for a better order of things,” as has been said, “is not a time of favorable appearances, but the reverse.”

All this, however, is happy and encouraging. The bud is bitter, the very moment before it opens to the scented flower. So that it is not only sufferings first, and then glory, but sufferings, commonly, in their sorest form, just before the glory and salvation break forth.

But there is a truth standing in company. With this, yet, as I may say, over against it. I mean the pride first, and then the overthrow or judgment of the man of the world, and that too in the hour of his highest, loftiest arrogance.

The builders of Babel were in one great confederacy, and the proud design which filled their heart, and which their hand was stretched out to accomplish, was nothing less than to raise a tower that was to reach to heaven. But in that hour of proudest daring the Lord comes down in judgment. (Gen. 11) Pharaoh had been raised to be the first man in the world, and in the thought of his greatness, and in the pride of his independency, had forgotten Joseph, and declared that he knew not the God of Israel. But it was then that the vials of wrath from the Lord’s hand began to be poured out upon him. (Ex. 5) Nebuchadnezzar walked in his palace, and admired his magnificence, and said, “Is not this great Babylon that I have builded?” But the Lord was watching upon that evil, and while the word of pride and importance was in his mouth, he that exalted himself was abased. (Dan. 4) And Herod, after all this, was lauded as a god, and in a moment the judgment of God made a spectacle of him. (Acts 12)

These were awful visitations in the hour of such prosperity and mighty pride of heart. And such things are foretold in prophecies, as well as illustrated in histories. The “Lucifer” of Isaiah, the “Prince of Tyrus” of Ezekiel, the “Man of sin” of the Apostle Paul, and the “Beast” of the Apocalypse, are all prophetic of the doom of a proud one in the moment of loftiest presumption.

These serious and interesting truths—the exaltation of the righteous in the moment of deepest depression, and the abasement of the proud in the hour of their stoutest self-sufficiency—may easily connect themselves with our recollections of the book of Esther. It closes the volume of the historical books of the Old Testament, and it is of all parts of Scripture the most full and vivid expression of these two great principles; and thus, at the close of the histories, we get, in fit and beautiful season, the most complete illustration of the sweet springs of the whole movement.

In the catalog of those proud ones, who meet their doom in their height of pride, I might have mentioned Haman, the Agagite. He was of the genuine seed of Amalek, with whom the Lord had a controversy forever, and who of old defied the glory as it began to unfold its brightness in the gloomy desert, in the freshest moments of Israel’s history. (Ex. 17) Prosperity had attended him in a remarkable manner. He had the ear, the hand, and the ring of his master, the Persian (the chiefest monarch upon earth) at his command! And his pride, because of all this, could brook no refusal—and if the servant of God will not worship, the whole nation of God’s people must pay the penalty.

In the day of this Amalekite, Esther appears in the scene. She had been a poor captive from the land of Israel, and was now in the land of the Persian; not only, however, in the common sorrow and degradation of her people, but with a grief and affliction that were peculiarly her own. She was an orphan, and in every sense a destitute one, save in the kindness and care of her godly kinsman, Mordecai.

In process of time, without any effort or desire on her part, she becomes the favorite wife of the Persian king. Nay, not only without effort or desire, but after she had, like another Daniel, purposed, though in the court of the Gentile, to preserve her Nazaritism, or separation to God from the customs of the people. (2:15) She will be no debtor to man. She will not, as it were, take from the king of Sodom (Gen. 14) beyond the necessary things. It is the Lord, and not ornaments, which gives her favor in the eyes of all who behold her; the king himself is won, and the crown royal is put upon her head.

And yet she is simply the Jewish maiden still, and obedient to Mordecai, as in the day when she was brought up by him in his own house.

This was a happy beginning. She began with herself, with a full purpose to keep herself pure. And such will be found fit for the Master’s use. (2 Tim. 2) Jerusalem might have boasted of such a daughter, though in the palace at Shushan. She might have stood a witness of the prophet’s truth— “Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire.” And when in further process of time she heard of the sorrows of her people, like another Moses, or Nehemiah, she forgets all that was her own—the ease and security and honors of the palace—and went forth to look only on their burdens.

This was going on happily. She who had kept herself from defilement was the one to throw herself amid the afflictions of others. She had watched against personal entanglements, and was thus free to serve. She was already girded, and waited only for a call. Right condition of every follower of Jesus. The only due and suited attitude of one called to the holy honor of serving in God's house. Esther, the queen, now carefully acquaints herself with the state of her people throughout the realm of the king's dominion, and casts herself at once under their burdens.

I have before hinted at the occasion of these burdens of Israel, and it is well known. The haughtiness of the great Agagite, who at this time had the Persian monarch at command, had not brooked the holy refusal of Mordecai, the Jew, to bow down to him; and he had prevailed so far as to get the whole nation of Israel (then scattered captives through the Persian provinces) under sentence of death, which was to be executed upon them on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month of that current year. Every Jew therefore, it may be said, carried the sentence of death in himself—a sentence, too, pronounced by a power which thought it scorn ever to change its decrees (Esther 1:19).

We might say that this same nation has been, after this manner, wonderful from the beginning and hitherto. The burning unconsumed bush was their symbol of old, and is their symbol still. They were a people under sentence of death in Egypt, as much as afterward in Persia; and have been of late centuries in Christendom, or all the world over. Did not Pharaoh utter another edict for their destruction? and was not God, who raiseth the dead, or who can dwell unharmed in a burning bush, or walk in a fiery furnace, their only helper? And have they not in the times of modern Europe been alike wonderful? This decree of the Persian was but the expression of the common history of this people, scattered and peeled, and meted out and trodden down, whose land all the rivers in their turn, in the pride of their overflowings, have spoiled.

And as to Mordecai, the distinguished and godly Israelite of his day, the present faithful and lovely branch of the tree of God's planting, he seems to have been a genuine son of Abraham. He believed in Him who could raise the dead. "Abide ye here with the ass," said the patriarch (Gen. 22) to his servants; "and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you"—though that lad was at that moment under sentence of death. And so Mordecai can surely count on deliverance coming, though the decree for destruction was speeding its way (4:14).

The present therefore was a moment of Israel's deepest depression. But the Lord, as we have been seeing, had an arrow hidden in His quiver, or the appointed, though as yet unnoticed, stone of help, amid the smoothing, polishing waters of the brook, soon to be ready for the sling (1 Sam. 17:40).

We have seen Esther beginning well, and going on well. She was in "the school of God." Communion was light and strength from the Lord Himself to her. She had strange and very blessed intimacy with Him Not that I speak of visions, or audiences, or trances, or anything of that nature; no, nothing of the kind. "In these days," I may say, "there was no open vision." But there was within her reach, what is within the reach of faith in every age, communion with God.

She could trust God, like another Shadrach. (Dan. 3) If He pleased, she doubted not that He could deliver her; but whether He pleased it or not, she had but to do her duty. She could, and would, venture all in the cause of service to Christ. Her soul, like Shadrach and his dear companions, was

prepared for any consequences. "If I perish, I perish," says she. Precious, beautiful workmanship of the hand of God! fashioned and graven indeed as both a lovely and serviceable vessel of His house.

But more than this. Esther may be observed to stand in very near fellowship with the mind of God. She seems as though she had observed the divine method with these proud adversaries; for she takes God's own way exactly with wicked Haman. She is not in haste. She lays her plans to let the heart of that Amalekite fill itself to the brim with pride, that he might fall, according to the divine way, in the moment of its most towering presumption.

She has "the golden scepter" on her side, and with it the king's promise to give her whatever she might ask, even to the half of his kingdom. But she is patient. She bids the king and Haman to her banquet of wine. They come; and again the half of the kingdom is put within her grasp. But she is still patient, and bids them a second time. Is this, I ask, mere patience? Is this mere calmness and self-possession, or nothing more (however excellent that would be) than the contradiction of the heat and impatience of the wicked? Is this merely virtue and a well-regulated heart, as opposed to the passionate way of an Herodias when in possession of the same offer? (Mark 6:23) It may have been all this but it was more. It was the way of one who knew and imitated God's way in like cases. The Lord; in possession as He is of all power, is patient, and even for 400 years can bear with an Amorite, till the measure of his sin be filled up. (Gen. 15:13-16) So here, the one who had learned from Him, the one who had been in the school of communion, can, though in the possession of the resources of a kingdom, be patient also, and let the "man of the earth" go on to the full measure of his sin. She bids Haman and the king a second time to her banquet. And Haman that day went forth joyful, and with a glad heart. He called his wife and his friends, and rehearsed all his greatness and prosperity to them, telling them moreover, as the very climax of his haughty thoughts and self-complacency, how queen Esther had again invited him and the king alone to her banquet of wine on the morrow. This is much to be observed. I need not say how all this loftiness of man was brought down in a moment. The story is known well among us. The day of the Lord was signally upon it all History has been said to be "the narrative of the prevalence, by turns, of the several counteractive powers that sway the world; and ordinarily it happens that at the very moment when a certain power, as with a flourish of trumpets, is proclaiming its triumph, it does in that blast of pride announce the appearance of its rival. Despotisms have on many signal occasions thus boasted, and thus fallen, in one and the same day." How true is this in God's histories, which a thoughtful, reflective mind thus discovers in the general course of the world's affairs! And how have we found it so in this history of Haman!

Nor need I say how Esther and Esther's people were delivered in the moment of deepest depression, and how the controversy between hope and fear ended in the most glorious and wonderful triumph of hope. The Jews had the sentence of death in themselves; but there is One who raiseth the dead, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning. "The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day." (Chapter 8:16,17) The month was turned to them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day. Esther was queen; and as for Mordecai, he was "next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed." (Chapter 10:3)

This I need not more exactly notice. But how profitable is it to watch the spirit and the path of this dear and honored woman! Her care to preserve herself pure, her deep sympathies with her brethren, her trust in the Lord, with decision of soul to do His will at all hazard! How full and instructive an example does all this set before us. And yet circumstances, as we speak, were much opposed to her. She was, I may say, “of Caesar’s household” —a condition in life which must have cost a true Israelite, a real decided Nazarite, much watchfulness of spirit and self-mortifying. But her walk with the Lord was so close and so genuine, that she appears to have reached some of the deepest secrets of His mind, acting on the great adversary, as I was noticing, precisely in God’s own way, nay, in very near fellowship with Him; for we see that as soon as her plan had ripened the pride of the heart of Haman, that moment the Lord began to act upon him, and prepare the instruments of his destruction. For it was the very night which intervened between the two days of queen Esther’s feasts that the Lord sent that dream into the heart of Ahasuerus, which leads to the humbling of the haughty Amalekite. (Chapter 6)

Let none say, then, that their circumstances are against them. Hers were eminently so. But decision of heart and singleness of eye brought her that strength which is a match for all circumstances.

This was a time of crisis. There have been others like it in the progress of the government of the world—a time when the master of the house rose up to shut to the door, or to discern between the righteous and the wicked. And in this crisis, in the days of Haman and Esther, as I observed, the great principles of God were expressed with peculiar decision—the exaltation of the righteous in the moment of deepest depression, and the humbling of the mighty in the hour of their proudest thoughts—characteristics, as I have also said, which are given with striking and seasonable fitness to this little book, which closes the historical volume in the Old Testament.

But the subject addresses itself to us. There is to be another crisis in the earth’s history, fearful and far extended beyond all. Every previous crisis will have been but a rehearsal and a shadow of it. Deep and deadly security, like that in which the generation of Noah was folded, who “knew not” in the midst of their marriage feasts, and buying and selling speculations, till the flood came, will be one feature of that day. Prosperity, and its companion pride, will give form to that day also. And I ask, is not the mystery of such a day now working? Are not things taking a strong direction that way? If one may speak for another, the heart is conscious that the world is prospering. Are not the accommodations and embellishments of human life increasing to a wonder? Is not this generation very loudly congratulating itself on what it has attained, silently pitying those who spent their days before present advantages were known, and boasting in expectation of refining and multiplying the resources of every future hour?

I believe these things are so, and that the heart is conscious of it. The world is prospering; and we know not how soon it may be that if any one refuse to help forward the common self-satisfaction, he must be treated as a common enemy. And what a mistake we may judge it to be (as another has expressed it), to think “that the suavity, the tolerance, the blind indifference, and the enlightened liberality which now are the garb of the infidel spirit belong to it by nature, or would be retained a day after it had nothing to fear.”

This is all solemn. The sentence of death has not gone out yet from the wounded pride of the Amalekite against the whole nation of the godly. No; it has not worked to that. The day will not

come yet, but the mystery of it is abroad. The pride itself has begun to labor in the heart; the throes and energies of that passion, which is to be the parent of such a decree, may, even now, be moving secretly, and be felt, and welcomed, and nourished.

Where is strength to be gathered? If pride and intolerance be nourished in some hearts, is faith in ours? Esther may read us a lesson upon victory in an evil day. She stood in such a day, and stood more than conqueror. Before it came she had kept herself, and refused to defile her garments. She had been in "the school of God," and learned the way of strength and victory there, in communion with Himself, when circumstances were all against her.

And let me add, that this communion is to be simple and affectionate, not such as will feed itself with high thoughts and strange thoughts, but such as will find Christ in the sureness and perfectness of His work for sinners the great thought, the precious thought, animating, the invigorating, though simple truth, that tells upon the heart with divine and wondrous virtue. There is danger (as another has warned us) of this ceasing to give character to an age like the present, where there is a vast and varied quantity of qualifications and arguments, rather than fervor and simplicity of spirit, where, as the natural result of intellectual and religious progress, "the glory of Christ, as Savior of man, which should be always as the sun in the heavens, shines only with an astral luster." But times of difficulty demand simple, nutritious, strengthening truth; "a different order of things around us would presently bring into play the more powerful elements of the moral life. Events may be imagined which would mar our levity, and break up the polished surface that reflects our case, and lead us home to the first principles of the gospel, and quite sicken our taste for everything but those principles; and it is under such an impression that the gospel (simple, plain truth of God's grace and salvation,) will assume its just dimensions in our sight, and the glad tidings of mercy be listened to with a new and genuine joy."

True, and also seasonable in this day of many a busy speculation, are these meditations. And most seasonable are the words of the blessed Lord Himself to His disciples, in the day that He began to talk to them of their coming troubles. "What is a man profited (said He to them) if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26) Here is truth for the strengthening of the heart against the day of evil. For these words speak the excellency and the value of the glories which are to follow the day of evil. Our Lord uses the language of the merchant. He speaks of profit, and loss, and exchange. He contemplates a bargain, and for the comfort of the believer He decides that a bad bargain that man would make, who would take the whole world (supposing that he could get it) in exchange for a share in the glory that is to be revealed. He is not (though this is the general apprehension) in this passage so much settling the question of personal safety, as of profit and loss.

And we all know the power of bright and sure expectation, though they may be still distant. Man will toil through dangers, weariness, and mortification, to reach such. And the Lord here witnesses to us the sureness and the brightness of our expectations, affirming His word, shortly after, by unveiling for a moment, on the holy hill, the very region of these promised glories. And if we believe His competency to handle these weights and measures, and to try comparative value, and then if we believe His truth in giving in the result of such trial or the judgment, our hearts will be further fortified for "every trying hour."

Peter, as it were, unconsciously vindicated the Lord's verdict on the value of the glory when he said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." Oh, can we look to Him, and say, "Thou shalt choose our inheritance for us."

Jesus, Heir of All Things

There is great contrast between the things spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews; on the one hand, evil and apostasy; and on the other, peculiarly precious truth. Indeed, there is perhaps no epistle in which we find more precious truth; just as though God meant to set in contrast the greatness of the evil and the preciousness of His truth. And thus He deals with souls now. A characteristic of the present hour is good and evil in marked contrast.

Evil and the power of Satan are fast spreading; also, the work of God is going on, and the great and deep truths of God are being made known to many souls. Thus the greatest light and the deepest darkness are seen side by side. These things cannot mingle, and therefore the contrast becomes more and more evident. The very light of heaven, in love and grace, is brought so near to the exercised soul, that in the darkest days of declension from the truth it may be said to get the most blessed knowledge of God; just as in Egypt darkness was spread over the whole land, but the Israelites had light in their dwellings.

This epistle sets forth the “heavenly calling” of the church. It shows us the heavenly glory of Christ, IN WHOM we are; and though that glory will be hereafter manifested on the earth, our “calling” is a calling up into the place where He now is, above (not merely the earth, but) the heavens.

But it speaks also of earth and of the things of the earth.

We find ourselves placed in the midst of this dark world, needing the present ministry of the priesthood of Christ, the cleansing power of His blood, and His sympathy. There is the going forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach; we have to be as those witnesses of whom it is said “the world was not worthy.” All this is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It places us in the midst of sin; or why the need of the blood? It places us in the midst of sorrow; or why the need of the sympathy? It says, “Here have we no continuing city;” but before it enters at all upon these earthly things, it opens to us heaven’s glory and blessedness, our portion in Christ, and tells us that all is of God. We are set again on earth, as cognizant of this.

Whatever is revealed to us of blessing comes from God. (James 1:17) Therefore the epistle begins with God. It is God “who hath spoken to us.” (vs. 1) Christ spoke, but it was God that spoke by Him. This is the thought throughout. Christ is the “Apostle and High Priest of our profession.” (Chapter 3:1, 2) Doubtless the High Priest is merciful and faithful in things pertaining to God; but it was God that “appointed Him.” Christ is “that great Shepherd of the sheep” (ch. 13:20); but it was God who “brought again from the dead,” and gave Him as the Shepherd over us. All blessing is through Christ, but it is from GOD.

This first verse refers to instruction given in “divers parts,” and in “divers ways.” The saints in the Old Testament dispensation—Moses, Samuel, and others—were only instructed partially (that is, “in parts”), and often years intervened before more instruction was given. None of them could say at any time, “I have all that needs to be known, of the mind of God.” Now, in this their position was vastly inferior to ours. We can say that we have all the fullness of this knowledge. It is true, “we

know” as yet “but in part,” and that hereafter we shall “know even as also we are known” (1 Cor. 13:12); still we have all that we need in the Word, whether it be “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” all is provided, so that no soul can now say that something more has to be revealed, in order to complete the man of God, throughly to furnish him unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:16,17) And I desire you should think—how great a blessing this is. Suppose a soul desires to know the right path, what a blessing for that soul to be able to say, “God has revealed all that I need.” This gives firmness and fixedness of faith; it enables the soul to say, “I know.” To us there is revealed that which we have to hold fast till Jesus comes.

These Hebrews well knew the peculiar blessings of Israel. God had spoken unto the fathers by Moses and by the prophets; there were sacrifices for sins, appointed of God; and there was a priesthood instituted of God to offer those sacrifices—the value and dignity of the priesthood they knew. But what a truth is taught in these verses! God has now spoken by His “SON.” Having been Himself the sacrifice for sin, the “SON” has come to take the priesthood. It is not any longer office dignifying the person of him who holds it, but the person of the Son of God giving dignity and glory to every office that He holds.

There is joy, doubtless, to Christ in holding these offices (for there is joy in holding offices for blessing, and it will be our joy by and by to hold offices for blessing together with Him); but what is His chief glory? Is it not His own excellency—that which He is in Himself? And that will be the saints’ chief blessing? It will not consist in any mere dignity of office (though we shall have that, and count it blessed), but in union with Christ the Son of God. Angels might stand in any office, but the chief excellency and the chiefest glory of the saints will be in their connection with the glorious person of the SON of God.

Now, it is the blessedness and the glory of the SON, and the connection of the saints with Him in all His blessedness and in all His glory, which the opening of this epistle unfolds.

Nothing so facilitates our knowledge of the proper glory of the church as acquaintance with the person of the SON of God.

When we see sorrow and tears, and connect them with the person of one whom we love, we have a much more vivid sense of what human nature is, than when we consider it abstractedly. We sorrow too; our nature sympathizes with his. So likewise is it with regard to joy.

All human similitudes must needs be imperfect here. In this second verse are words, given to us of God, by which we may understand a little about the person of the SON of God, and yet they fall short of describing that which fully expresses what pertains to Christ.

He is called “the brightness (the irradiation) of His glory”—the glory of God. The idea presented by the figure is something like that of the rays of the sun. If there were no rays we should not see the light of the sun, although the sun might be in the firmament of the heaven. The sun would shine in vain were it not for the beams which reach us. And so the Son of God is like the rays—the shining forth of the glory of God. The same in essence, the “Son” is the irradiation of that essence, in order that it might reach us, that there might be something to teach us the glory of God. Probably, even to the angels the glory of God would have been a hidden glory; they never could have known anything of the glory of God but through the SON; and thus before all worlds they beheld the glory of the SON.

He is also called “the express image of His person” (that is, substance). This is the nearest approach to declaring God’s essence, or essential existence. The word substance means essential being, or existence. How little we know about this! God, self-existent One who never had a beginning, yet full of all that we know of blessed attributes. This we cannot understand, but must believe. And He has said that the SON is the “express image,” the “impress,” as it were, “of His substance.” The illustration is that of the impress of a seal. Though you had never seen the seal, I might show you the impress of it, that which was exactly like it, and from that impress you could form a true idea of the seal. So Christ is the “Impress” of the substance of God, One in whom are essentially all the thoughts and feelings of God; and this, too, the SON was before all worlds.

Though essentially Light, He was also the “Irradiation” of that Light. Though essentially God, He represented God—He was the “Impress” of the substance of God. Being with God, and being God, He became the Manifester of God, so that through Him others learned God.

“And upholding all things by the word of His power.” This, too, the Son always was, the Upholder and Sustainer of “all things” (Col. 1:16,17), not by His power only, but by “the word of His power.” (Gen. 1:3; Psa. 33:9) Yet He laid aside the exercise of that power for a time. Whilst here in humiliation, “in the days of his flesh,” He trembled and feared. (Chapter 5:7) It was still His own essential power, but it was kept in abeyance, not exercised, unless called forth in obedient service to God. (John 5:30) There was this difference between the miracles of Jesus and those of others. He was always obedient; but there were occasions when He used and declared His own essential power, as when He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” (John 2:19) This showed His power as God; but He never used it except in subjection and in obedience to the Father.

And here is the mystery of the Incarnation. It is that which we cannot understand—what we have to do is to believe. He had human thoughts, and feelings, and sympathies—was truly “man,” yet was He “God manifest in the flesh.” (1 Tim. 3:16) He “feared” and “trembled,” “He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death,” yet was He the irradiation of the glory of God. The “wisdom” of God (Prov. 8), He took the place of a learner, of one who comes morning by morning to receive instruction. (Isa. 1. 4; Luke 2:52) That the eternal “Word” should have taken into connection with Himself (John 1:1,14) a nature like ours, and which felt sensible of distance from God, (although His was ever holy human nature) is the great mystery of the Incarnation, so that not one sorrow which He felt was alleviated by His power as God. He might have poured a flood of light into His human understanding, and not have cried, “I longed for Thy commandments” (Psa. 119:13), yet He did not. He might have turned (for He had power to do it) the stone into bread, when He hungered (Matt. 4; Luke 4) yet He did not. It would not have been the path of obedience; He had no command to do so from God. This was one part of the trial of the Son of God, this continual subjection of will, although it was a holy will. And what an unwavering principle of obedience did it prove! (for who but knows how readily we turn to the resource near at hand!) what constancy of soul! even when He might so easily (and it would not have been sin to do so) have brought to Himself the needed relief, still to go on, from year to year, in dependence upon God, still to say, No! if I want light, I will wait for it!

On the one hand, there was all the power of God; and on the other, the weakness of man.

There are two periods mentioned in this chapter, in which God is shown to do something for Christ.

1st. Appointing Him “Heir of all things.”

2nd. Bringing again the first-begotten into the world.

It is said (vs. 2) that He hath “set” or “made” Him Heir of all things. God has been pleased to constitute Christ “Heir” in resurrection, to make Him “so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” (vs. 4)

The declared intention of God before the foundation of the world was, that the Son should be “Heir of all things.” Angels might have known, but they could not understand this. He was to receive “all things” (as a son receives an inheritance) as the free gift of the Father’s love. It is not the glory which He had with God, and as God, before the world was, that is spoken of here.

And there is joy in this to the heart of Christ, as well as love and grace to us, for we are “joint-heirs” together with Him. I can only see what a Christian is, and what his portion is, by seeing what Christ is. Angels are not this; angels understand the excellency of the person of Christ, but they are not “joint-heirs,” they have not union with Christ. But God has given us joint-heirship, and union with Christ! There are three things which belong to the church—sonship, heirship, and union with Christ. We learn what we are by seeing what Christ is.

And shall I say, He gave all this to man universally? Scripture does not say so. Had it been said, ‘He taketh hold of the seed of Adam,’ then every one that has human nature must not only have been saved, but have been brought into co-heirship of this glory. But it is said, “Of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold.” (Chapter 2:16) And who are they? Those who are of faith. (Gal. 3:7, 29)

In following on through these things, we must remember that we are one with Him. We can be addressed as “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (chap. 3:1), and why? Because, being united to Him, what He has, we shall have; where He is, we must be and He is “made higher than the heavens.”

The first thing spoken of here as having been done by Christ is, that He has by Himself purged our sins. “Who (it is said), when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” This is a very important text. It refers both to what He was as a sacrifice, and also to what He has done as a priest.

Two things were necessary to the purging of our sins in the order of God. (Compare Lev. 16 with chapters 9 and 10 of this epistle)

1st. The shedding of blood.

2nd. The presenting of that blood to God.

Both these things Christ accomplished “by Himself.” This settled the question of sin forever. And then He took His seat, “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” as a person who has done a thing which he had to do takes his seat. The expression “sat down” is an official expression. (See chap. 10:11-14)

So that we can never rightly think of Christ as where He now is, without seeing that the very circumstance of His being there, in itself shows that our sins are put away forever. The present possession of glory by Christ is an evidence to me that my sins are put away. What a wondrous connection there is here between happiness and peace of soul, and His glory!

It is not said, that after He had purged our sins He was made the “brightness of God’s glory,” and the “express image of His person;” this He was essentially before all worlds. But it is said, that after He had purged our sins, He took His seat on high, “being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee?” Scripture is very particular.

Consider what the angels must have thought at the entrance of Christ into glory. They had known Him before the world was as God; but they had never known Him there before as man. Never until that moment could they understand what glorified humanity was. It must doubtless have been a great mystery to them to consider “the man Christ Jesus,” whilst He was on earth; but the moment He entered heaven as man, He was there before God and angels, the Head of a new race, having all the essential characteristics of God, and yet the nature of man, the sympathies, desires, and feelings of man; at home on the throne of the government of the universe, yet having our nature—truly man. This is the place in which to read the real history of man according to God. Angels see in Jesus what our nature is to be, and by placing ourselves there, we may know the purpose of God about us. He has predestinated us, it is said, “to be conformed to the image of His Son.” (Rom. 8:29) Man was not made in order that he might experience only vanity, and sorrow, and trouble, though it is true now, that “man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.” (Job 5:7) The Scriptures introduce us to the birthday of new humanity; they lead us on to the new heavens and the new earth, and there they leave us. (2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1-5) When we look back to what the Son essentially was before all worlds, and then to what He now is, and onward to what He will be (together with the church) in the ages to come, this gives us some idea of new humanity and of its glory. There will be nothing terrible to us in glory. John felt himself (Rev. 1) brought into strange and hitherto unknown circumstances, a creature before God, and he fell at the feet of Jesus as dead. But we shall then be suited to it, and happy in it.

In the succeeding verses, we find scriptures quoted which reveal to us various dignities and glories of the Lord Jesus. Some of them speak of that which is permanent and eternal, others of that which is transitory. “I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son,” appears to be quoted from the typical prophecy about Solomon (2 Sam. 7), and to be connected with the earth, the glory of government.

Thus we have in this chapter the glory which Christ had as the Son before the world was, the glory which He now has, and the glory which will be displayed when He is ushered again into this world, as it is written: “When He bringeth again [margin] the First-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.”

From the dignity of His Person, and from the glory which He now has, we may learn a little of what that coming glory will be. But the first moment that we shall really know that glory is when God thus commands the angels to worship Him. It will be the time of the “manifestation” of our own glory as “sons of God.” (Rom. 8:15-19; 1 John 3:1,2) And this is what the apostle means when he says,

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” (1 Thess. 4:14) When He comes in His glory, we shall be in the train of that glory. The moment after He had purged our sins He could take His place on the throne of God, the pledge of the church’s final glory (chap. 6:20); the moment He comes again, we shall be made practically to know the result of His work, in the glory. Intermingled with our experience of glory, now there must be a trembling, for glory is always terrible to nature, the judgments of God terrible to human feelings. But we are told, that when He comes again, when we are brought into the glory, we shall be made like unto Himself; and this by God’s transforming power: He is able to make us like unto Christ, and that in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. (1 Cor. 15:49-53) We shall have none of the feelings of our present nature, of old humanity then. All that is of mere nature will be broken off and laid aside, and we shall be like Christ.

“Of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands: they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail,” (vss. 7-14) Who is this displayed as King on His throne—worshipped by angels—around whom all things are gathered? The living and eternal God. Christ Jesus may have been under the power of Satan and of death for a season—wondrous thought!—yet is He unchangeably God. Nothing can alter or affect His essential and eternal Godhead and glory.

And we are spoken of as “His fellows.” We cannot understand the nature of our union with Christ. Godhead is not ours, nor ever can be; and yet we shall have capacities and powers resulting from union with Him in all that He is, even as God.

It is said that He is anointed with the oil of gladness “above” His fellows, and when that is said, all is said. It is true we are but the receivers, while He is the Source; in Him that is essential which in us is derived; yet in every felt blessing we are to be one with Him And we shall not desire that it should be otherwise; we shall rejoice to say, ‘Let all things be of God’ (2 Cor. 5:18). We shall see the fitness of our being but receivers, and of His being the Source, as it is said, “His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”

The being anointed with the “oil of gladness” is spoken of in connection with what He was here, as loving righteousness and hating iniquity. We can easily understand that joy—it is a peculiar spring of joy to the heart of Jesus. But we may enter a little into the same character of gladness; and this we shall in proportion as, while here, we also love righteousness and hate iniquity.

The thought conveyed by the word, “a scepter of righteousness,” is that of the shepherd’s rod. A king should be to his people what a shepherd is to his flock. Now Christ, will hold the “rod” in that day as a Shepherd King, and it will be a “scepter of righteousness.” And we shall share in His rule. But then He holds it now (though not for the world, yet) for His church. Do we recognize this rod? Truth becomes practically blessed to us when looked at, not abstractedly, but as connected with ourselves.

When we read this chapter, we can say, This is what our inheritance is. If it sets us above angels, how much more so above the flesh, whether in ourselves or in others! How lovely soever the flesh may appear, we are far above it. With such a portion and such a glory, can we desire station or dignity here? It gives contentment to those who are low in the world, and abasement to those who are great. These are the inward feelings produced in saints by the knowledge of the glory. In outward things there are two lines of difference between those who are one in Christ, and with Christ. First, as regards gifts in the church; these the Holy Ghost divides to each severally as He wills. Secondly, as to natural arrangements and relationships appointed of God; these things are right and good, and we find them so, when received in the Spirit. If they act on the flesh, they bring sorrow. Paul and Onesimus as to inward feelings were on a level, but in the church they had different places and gifts; so also as men.

These are great things respecting the glory of Jesus, and our union with Him, but it is God's word, and not man's. The same word which tells us of Adam and his sin, tells us of this. We did not see Adam sin, yet we believe that he sinned, and we feel the consequences of his sin. Why should we not as fully receive the testimony of God, when He speaks of our union with His SON, and of the glory into which we shall be brought, as heirs together with Him

Worship in Spirit and in Truth

IT is impossible to separate true spiritual worship and communion from the perfect offering of Christ to God. The moment our worship separates itself from this, its efficacy, and the consciousness of that infinite acceptance of Jesus before the Father, it becomes carnal, and either form or delight of the flesh. When the Holy Spirit leads us into real spiritual worship, it leads us into communion with God, into the presence of God, and then, necessarily, all the infinite acceptability to Him of the offering of Christ is present to our spirit; the acceptance of that sweet savor is that in which we go to Him. We are associated with it, it forms an integral and necessary part of our communion and worship. We cannot be in the presence of God in communion without finding there the perfect favor of God in which an offered Jesus is. It is, indeed, the ground of our acceptance, as well as of our communion. Apart from this, then, our worship falls back into the flesh; our prayers form what is sometimes called a gift of prayer, than which nothing often is more sorrowful; a fluent rehearsal of known truths and principles, instead of communion and the expression of our wants in the unction of the Spirit; our singing, pleasure of the ear, the taste in music and expression in which we sympathize, all a form in the flesh and not communion in the Spirit. All this is evil; the Spirit of God owns it not; it is not in Spirit and in truth; it is really iniquity.

Notes on John 17

This chapter has a very peculiar character, in that it is not the address of the Lord Jesus to His disciples even, much less to the world. It is their admission to hear Him address His Father about them. And we can easily understand that, where such a privilege is given them, we should be let into the fullest possible apprehension of the place in which He has set us. When He spoke to the world, Christ suited Himself to their capacity; and we, in our measure, ought to seek to do the same. But when He was addressing His Father, we can naturally understand that He would speak freely of what He had on His heart about His disciples. But still, as it concerned them (now, through grace, we have received the Spirit who communicates these things to our souls), He spoke it in the audience of the disciples, so that they should hear and know what His heart felt about them. Let me ask you this: If we find that Christ has an interest in us, and that He is speaking to His Father, and speaking of us—of what He has on His heart for our blessing—do our hearts turn with interest to listen and to know what He feels about us? We have wretched cold hearts, it is true—nothing is worse than their deadness and indifference to God. An openly bad, vile man of the world is bad enough; but if I saw a son do what was wrong, and if his father went out and intreated him with all the tender affection of a father, and he did not trouble his heart about what he said, I should say there is no hope now.

Therefore, when I find this first truth, that Christ has us on His heart, and can speak to His Father about us—that we are become the object of their common interest, surely our hearts should turn to it. “These things,” He said, “I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” The character of Christ’s love being perfect, was to bring us into the same blessing with Himself. It is very true, but it is not all the truth, that we are blessed through Christ: we are blessed with Him, and that was the perfection of His love. He loves us enough to have us near Him, and have us all in the, perfectness of His own heart; and having opened our understandings to see what He is, and to delight in what He is, He gives us the consciousness of His own perfect love. “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” If I always saw perfect blessedness before me, with the consciousness at the same time that I never should have it, that would not give comfort to my heart; but if I have a perfect object before me, with a certainty that I shall possess it, I shall be occupied with that object. Whilst here below we have the consciousness, in looking at our blessing in Christ, that we are not perfectly like what He is; we desire it, we long to be conformed to the image of Christ. But still, if we have in any measure tasted the loveliness of Christ, what distresses the heart is that we are not like Him. But here Christ engages the affections, and brings the heart to this point—the consciousness that this is our place in Him before God, and that all the blessedness that He has is ours. Does it become us to say no? Is it humbleness to be short of that, to say we are unworthy? Is God right? But it is no humbleness to refuse grace. And then, when it is seen to be such grace—unmingled grace—it is no humbleness to speak of not being fit to have such things. If I talk about not being quite worthy, there is the thought that if I were worthier I should be fit to have these blessings. Here is just where the want of humbleness is. You ought to be on the right ground with the Lord. That which enables us to have

this thought and desire of being brought into the presence and blessing of God, and to be like Christ, is, that all is grace. We are nothing. If we look at the glory that is before us, it at once puts out the thought of all worthiness in ourselves.

Here, then, the Lord is just setting us in His own place upon earth. Poor feeble creatures we are for it; but He is setting us in His place on earth. "Father," He says, "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." This chapter is often spoken of as being a prayer. The half is a prayer; but all the other part is a plain and full exposition of the ground on which He places us, beginning with His going up to heaven, and then going on to the glory which He will give us. There is the prayer, too—a prayer for us while we are passing through the trials and difficulties of this world. Christ gives us this place with Himself above; but He speaks while still in the world, that we might have it from His own lips in the world. It is not as taking us out of the world; but He begins it all from that starting-point, that we shall be in the glory. When He was here He did not want any witness; He was Himself the heavenly witness; but now He is gone He sets His saints as His living active epistle in a world that they do not belong to any more than He did.

First, then, look at the way in which He introduces us into this place. You will see in the first few verses that it is a question of Himself being glorified: "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, glorify Thy Son.... as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.... I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glory Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." Now there are two thoughts which the Lord brings out there. He says, "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee,"—that is the title which His person gives Him to this glory. And the other is, "I have glorified Thee on the earth"; "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me"; that is, the Lord presents these two grounds on which He is asking for His glory as man. He is glorified in virtue of His person, and then glorified in virtue of His work.

It is in connection with both these titles that we have to see our place on earth. He takes His place with the Father in virtue of His own personal title, and in virtue of His accomplished work. There is the basis which He lays for our admission into this place of blessing; and at the close He says, "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." The love wherewith the Father had loved Christ should be in the disciples. They should enjoy it; they should have His joy fulfilled in themselves. It is this that we are called to: the enjoyment in this world of the love that Christ knew here below—of His Father's love. He was there the Son of God, as man in this world; and what was His delight? Was it from the world? Surely not. Was He of the world? He was not. He was walking in the world; but His character and place while there was as the Son of the Father. There was His joy; not from the world, no more than He was of it, but from the Father.

There was His constant blessedness. The wellspring of His delight in a world that hated Him was the constant in-flowing of the Father's love to Him. He was His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased. Now the first point is, how such as we are can get into such a place. The Lord always retained the perfect consciousness of His Father's love. How can a sinner get there? Though He had declared His Father's name to the disciples (take, for an example, the sermon on the mount),

did they understand it? No; they had not the Spirit of adoption. He revealed the name and character of the Father, but their hearts did not enter into this relationship.

Christ, as man walking down here, was the Son of Man which is in heaven. His person gives Him this title. He walks through this world in suffering and trial. He suffers from man for righteousness' sake, and for love's sake. But whatever the suffering through which He was passing, He always addressed God as His Father during all the time of His life in this world; every expression of His heart was of His conscious relationship to God as Father. But when He comes to the cross, it is, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Upon the cross, all that God was in His holy hatred of sin fell on Christ for our sakes; and hence it was not then a question of love and fellowship, but all else that God was was against Him, as bearing our sins. Was God true? That righteousness was against Him, because of sin. All that God was—is holiness, truth, majesty, righteousness—all was against Him, because in the cross He was as the One made sin for us. The one other thing in God's nature was His love, and that Christ necessarily could not then taste; therefore, on the cross He does not say Father, but it is, "My God, My God!" Afterward, when just expiring, He does say, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Never was He more perfect, never more acceptable to God, than on the cross. God was a debtor in that sense to Christ; for His character was brought out as it never had been before. If God had merely swept away all men in anger, there would have been no love; if He had spared all in mercy, there would have been no righteousness. But Christ giving Himself up to death, and to the bearing of God's wrath on the cross, there is perfect righteousness against sin, and perfect love to the sinner. God was there fully glorified in all that He was. And now, having done that—the whole question of sin being settled, and all Christ was being proved in the resurrection—He says, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren." The Lord Jesus then comes, having been heard and answered in resurrection; and now he says, "Go, and tell My brethren, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, to My God and your God;" that is, He brings out both those names now; the relationship in which He had been as a Son with the Father all His life long, and the full effect of all that God was as such, which He had borne as wrath against sin, He now brings out as entirely for us. If it is a question of God's righteousness, we are made the righteousness of God in Christ. If it is His love, we are loved with the same love with which Christ was loved. Grace is reigning through righteousness by Jesus Christ. Everything that the Father can be towards sons, that He delights in—as He was to Christ, so He reveals Himself to us. Sin is put entirely away, and by the very word of Christ Himself the disciples are even brought, by the efficacy of His work of redemption, into a place along with Himself. He declares His name unto His brethren: "I ascend unto My Father and your Father,"; and He puts them in this place after death and judgment has been gone through, and He is risen out of it, so that His righteousness becomes that in which we stand before God. While Christ was upon earth He remained entirely alone, because the atonement was not made. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." But He has died, and now He can bring them into the place belonging to Himself; and that is what He is doing now. Did sin hinder it? Yes; but it is put away. Did righteousness? Yes; but it is for them and for us.

If we speak of the sufferings of Christ, there were two kinds of suffering, quite distinct one from the other. In one sense He went through every possible kind of suffering. He suffered from man for righteousness' sake, and He suffered from God for sin's sake. The suffering from God for sin He took for us entirely alone; He suffered it that we might not suffer it. He took it fully—drank the cup

to the very dregs, and it is done with. In His sufferings for righteousness' sake, He gives us the privilege of suffering with Him. "To you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." If we suffer from man for righteousness' sake, there we are with Him; but with suffering for sin we have nothing to do. He has taken it entirely alone: not one drop is left; no particle or trace of it remains for us. He took it that we might never have it. And now, having done that, He takes another place, in which man, as man, must necessarily remain a stranger to Him. But the fact that Christ is gone up on high is the reason why I can be with Him. When He was upon earth, I could not be in any full sense with Him. Why? Because He was holy, and I was not. But when sin has been put away, and He is gone into heaven, and has taken a place there in the presence of God, He has done that by which I can draw near. He has gone into the presence of God, with a righteousness which gives me a title to be there. Thus, the glory in which Christ is, which He has entered as having accomplished redemption, enables me to be with Him, instead of being a hindrance. I never could be with Him, if He had not been in this glory. He might visit us in mercy, but it is as risen from the dead and gone up on high that He gives us the place of union with Himself before God.

What He is doing now, is to reveal this name of the Father to us. When He spoke to Abraham He said, "I am the Almighty God, walk before Me." God revealed Himself in a character on which Abraham's faith was to act: it is the revelation of Himself as the One who was all-powerful, whatever might be the difficulties of the path; and Abraham was to live by faith in that name. He says to Moses, "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My name Jehovah was I not known to them." Now He takes this name with Israel: He puts Himself in relation with Israel by the name of Jehovah. He was the unchanging One, who would be faithful to His word and oath, however many the changes that Israel might have to pass through. He was thus a perfect Protector; He was the Almighty One; He was Jehovah; but that is not what I want, blessed as it is in its place. I want eternal life. But He comes now with another name. The Son reveals the Father's name. If I have found this, that the Father has sent the Son to be a Savior, and that this work is accomplished, I say this is not now merely a Faithful and Almighty Protector, or the One true God that governs the world righteously: He is interested in my salvation. He takes the place of a Father to me, if I receive His Son. I get in Christ the revelation of my place with God, and that, consequent upon the blessed truth that He has taken away the sin that shut me out from the presence of God, and has gone up before the Father, that I may have the very same place that belongs to Him as the Son of the Father. Can I possibly have more than that? Yes, there is even more than that. In virtue of it, there is the Comforter sent down. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." The Holy Ghost comes down because of Christ's being exalted at the right hand of God. He becomes the Spirit of adoption. "Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." So that the place in which we find Christ thus glorified, we find the believer set in, as this righteousness presented to God. The Holy Ghost is given as that which seals me, and gives me the power and blessing of the place into which Christ has brought me. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." There is the relationship. Then there is the work, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." He asks then that the Father should glorify Him, and adds, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world... Now they have known that all things, whatsoever Thou

hast given Me, are of Thee.” It was not merely what Messiah received from God, but what the Son had from the Father, that was made known to them. And He adds, “I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them.”

Two things you will find connected with the position in which the disciples are thus set: first, that which ministers to their joy, and then the place which they have as witnesses for Him in the world. He has communicated to them all the means of this joy: “I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me.” “Henceforth,” as He said before, “I call you not servants for the servant knoweth not what His Lord doeth; but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.” Now He puts us in the place of sons, and as sons the words that the Father gives Him He makes known unto us. What Christ does is bringing us into the enjoyment of His own relationship and place with God. The first thing He does is, to secure our being in it by this work of atonement. Then, having wrought this, the next thing is to give us the name by which we are called to know God as the Father; and accordingly He gives us all the words of the Father, that we may have the joy of this place in which He has set us. “I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine.... Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we are.” He puts them under the shelter of the name “Holy Father.” He looked for them to be kept with all the Father’s tenderness; that is, they are in this world under this name of Holy Father. And then He presents these two motives to His Father for keeping them: first, “for they are Thine;” and the other is, “I am glorified in them.”

Do you believe that the Lord was speaking the truth? When He says He tells us these things, that we might have His joy fulfilled in ourselves, did He really mean so? I believe it. I believe that the Lord meant us to have His joy fulfilled in ourselves. If you tell me that we are poor feeble vessels to have it, that is most true; but He did not speak thus. The possession of life is not power. Power is in Christ, and in Christ alone; for the character of the new man is dependent and obedient. If you say, I have life from God, and therefore I have got power, it is not true; but if you say, I have got life from God, but I have got the temptations of Satan and the world, and all that can seduce me away from the range and exercise of this life, and you say, Father, keep me, I want to be kept, then there will be power. When Paul gets into the third heaven, what is the effect! When there the flesh is not puffed up; for he is there to hear things which he cannot even utter down here. But when he comes down the flesh would use it to say that no one had ever been in the third heaven but himself. He must get that broken down; therefore the thorn is sent, which brings the consciousness of weakness where boasting had been before. We are never in danger in the presence of God; but when we are thinking of having been there, danger is there—the thorn gives conscious weakness to the man himself. In Paul’s case we know it was something that made his preaching contemptible. The Lord has to put us down in every way. The danger of the Christian is, that he is not consciously weak, that the flesh is not put in its place, that he thinks he can do something; but when the flesh is put down, where it had pretended to be something, then the believer can say, “When I am weak, then am I strong,” and Christ is exalted. For when Paul, with all this incompetency, was the means of such blessing to others, it is quite clear that it was Christ, and not Paul, that was the strength. This is the truth that is brought out before us in 2 Corinthians 12—Christ’s perfect righteousness and glory, which is ours, or the man in Christ; and then the man made nothing of, and Christ in him everything. There is where we get the Christian complete. In both cases it is Paul; but in the one it is the man in Christ, and in the other it is Christ in the man,

and the man thus made nothing of. That which the believer has on earth is not only this place in Christ in heaven, but the power of Christ in this world. While we certainly shall have the experience of what we are, at the same time the Scripture shows us always, as such, no necessity in this world for being anything else but Christ. "To me to live is Christ." The fact that the flesh is in me is no reason that I am to walk after it. The power is not in the fact that we have the life, but in exercised dependence upon the life that we have got in Christ. We have seen the full blessedness of this place, that we may have His joy fulfilled in ourselves.

And now He goes on to their testimony before the world. "I have given them Thy Word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Here I find the Christian's place in the world: he is no more of it than Christ. He does not say, They ought not to be; but, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." As Christians deriving your life from Christ, and having your place with Christ, you are not of the world. The life, the place you have got in Christ, all flows from the fact that He has given you a relationship with the Father, in virtue of which you are no more of the world than He Himself was. There is the manifesting of Christ to the world; but these duties and affections flow from a relationship that is established already. It is not as the way of getting into the relationship; but when Christ has become my life, then I must walk as He walked. To the world this becomes a testimony. Of what? What became of Christ Himself? The world would not have Him. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." It was as good as saying, There is a complete breach between the world and me. Christ comes into the world in grace, revealing the Father, and the world hated Him; and therefore He goes out of the world, and brings us into His place as gone on high. Will the world bear us any more love than it bore Him? It will not. He is there because the world would not have Him; and it is only as having entered that place by blood and death that He can say, "My Father and your Father, My God and your God." Now, He says, I will make you a witness of that. You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world."

How are we to get the character and spirit proper to us as such? It is not that we can always be in the third heaven, but that if living the life of Christ, in the power of the Spirit, we shall be manifesting it before the world, as it was with Christ Himself. He could say even as to His path down here, "The Son of Man which is in heaven." Was there ever anything in Christ inconsistent with the third heaven? Therefore my life being there, and my heart and affections, I shall walk according to that place. Where is the pathway for such a life through this world? "I have given them Thy word, and the world hath hated them." "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." That is not quite all. Christ is the truth: the word of God is truth about everything. Do I want to know what my heart is? The Word tells me. Do I want to know what God is? The Word tells me. What Christ as a Savior is? What Satan and his wiles are? The Word will tell me. And therefore I have the Word to make all plain, when I want to go through the world, which is a labyrinth for any one else; for a labyrinth it naturally must be to all, and to the infidel specially. God is love, and yet there I see such misery of every kind around me; the child of three days old agonizing perhaps through the fault of its parents; nothing but suffering and sorrow everywhere. Nobody, I say, can understand this: it is unaccountable, except as the Word of God, which is truth, explains it all. Take Christ Himself: He can appeal to them and say, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Yet how does it end? He is obliged to confess before men that God has forsaken Him. Their hard hearts

take advantage of this, and say, If God delight in Him, let Him deliver Him. All is inexplicable; and those who would make this world, as it is, a proof of the righteous government of God, are just doing what the friends of Job did. They were saying that this world could be explained as to the present expression of God's moral government. But no: there is Job, and he is in the depths of suffering. He was very naughty, but he spoke more rightly than they. He says, I have seen the righteous man suffering, He wants to find God; he says, Oh, if I could see him but I cannot find Him. All this, I again say, is in itself inexplicable. But the moment I search into the Word of God, I have got the key to it all. Take the infidel upon his own ground, and he has not a word to say: he is the least capable of any of explaining the facts that are going on every day; for they are inexplicable, except as sin has come in. "Sanctify them through Thy truth." It is the word of God applied to judge every thought and feeling that is in me. He does not say, "Sanctify them by the law," but by the word. Persons take the law as a rule, but you want power; you want an object that seizes your affections. What object does the law give you? Where is the thing—the One—you are to love? Where is He? Who is He? The law cannot and does not tell me, save of a judge: I have no object before my soul to give me blessed and holy affections; but the Father's word does give me this.

That is what He goes on to immediately. "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Now I get something more than the word; it is Christ Himself who is the substance of all that the word speaks about: And therefore Christ says, as regards His place, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself" He has gone up to glory, and there sets Himself apart as the object for our hearts. The Holy Ghost reveals Him to me, and the word is the revelation of all that is in Christ; it brings to me all that Christ is— "Sanctify them through Thy truth." How? "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." I have now got an object: it is the truth, which will judge everything, that is in my heart. This it is that sanctifies me, by showing me the One that I love, and who has said that I am going to be like Him. I have a Christ who has got hold of my heart, who has given me a place with Himself, and has fitted me for it by the revelation of Himself to my heart. And that is what I find here. And besides this place, I get the Comforter sent down, taking of the things of Christ and showing them to me, revealing to me that He has given me what He has, that I may have it with Him, that I may be like Him, when I see Him as He is. And now the sanctifying power is that the Spirit takes of these things and shows them unto me. More than all, Christ Himself is mine. He is the perfect and blessed Man set apart in the presence of God; and that, transported into my heart in the living power that it has in me through the Spirit, sets me apart to God. It is the truth that sanctifies me; but if I look at what the truth is perfectly, it is Christ. We, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." "For their sakes," as our Lord says here, "I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

"Neither pray I for these alone" (He brings in other Christians there), "but for them also which believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." He imparts to us all that He has taken as man in blessing and glory. He will have us enter into His joy while upon earth; and then I find, "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." When the Lord comes, and when the saints are displayed

in the glory of Christ, and with Him, that will be the revelation to the world that we have been loved as Christ has been loved. "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one: and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me."

But even this is not the best thing He has to give us. He goes on to say, "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." While He has given us the glory of the inheritance, He puts us before the world as those who have been brought into the same glory with Himself. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." And then the world will say, These poor people that we have despised are loved with the same love Christ was loved with. But while all that is true and most blessed, we shall, besides, have the enjoyment of Himself. We ought to have it now. "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." We get the present knowledge that we are loved as Jesus is loved; for He has declared the Father's name to us, and will declare it, that the love wherewith He is loved may be in us, and He in us. There is the place in which He puts the Christian now. Christ will bring us into the glory; but even that, in a sense, is an inferior thing, compared to the enjoyment of Christ Himself. I do not wait till then to know that I am loved as Christ is loved; I know it now; the world will know it then. All being founded upon this work that He has done, and upon His being thus in the presence of God, which put us in this Himself, we can say, I know that I am loved as the Father loves Jesus, if Christ says it, "that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." Is it in you? Have you believed Jesus' word, that the Father has loved you as He loved His own Son? It was not enough for Him to give His Son for you, but He puts you in the same place, and loves you with the same love. If we grieve the Spirit, we may not enjoy the power of it; but there is the place in which Christ has set us to stand with His Father and our Father, His God and our God, and to enjoy Him who is the truth, and who gives us the consciousness of being loved as He Himself is loved. It may be manifested before the world when He comes, but it is ours now; the Lord only give us to believe it. If we are seeking the world, that is not the Father's love, but enmity to it. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away..." You will find these three always opposed the one to the other—the flesh and the Spirit, the devil and the Son, the world and the Father. "All that is in the world," if our hearts seek after it, damps the enjoyment of the Father's love; for we are not of the world, even as Christ was not.

The Lord give you to know it, as it is testified of Jesus Himself, and then, as walking in His steps, and sanctified by the revelation of Himself in your heart, to enjoy the real consciousness of the blessedness of the love wherewith the Father loves you.

A Full Christ for Empty Sinners

Well does the writer remember the effect on his own mind of the perusal, upwards of twenty years ago, of a paper in the first volume of the Christian Witness, on "The Distinct Characters of the several Writings of the New Testament." If not the first, it was among the first means of leading him to read Scripture in the light of the characteristic subject and aim of each distinct portion of it. But, while leaning on God's grace as the only efficient cause of true instruction, every attempt to impart to others what has been so precious to his own soul has served more deeply to convince him of the truth of one remark in the paper above referred to; namely, that "the expression of one's own thoughts, and the acting so as to awaken similar thoughts in others, are two very different things; and the latter is a rarer and more self-denying attainment than the other." It is not as attempting much more than the former that the following thoughts are submitted to such as bring all they read and hear to the test of the Word of God itself.

Much that twenty or thirty years ago had to some of us all the vividness and freshness of truth newly discovered to the soul has long, as to the letter of it at least, been familiar to all who are likely to read these remarks. The way in which the same blessed person is presented in Matthew as the Messiah of Israel; by Mark, in active service as the Minister of the Word; by Luke, in the fullness of that grace in which He, the Son of Man, came to men as such, to seek and to save that which was lost; and by John as the Word which was in the beginning, which was with God, and was God, but which was made flesh, and dwelt among us; all this the reader has doubtless read and heard again and again, until the words remain in the memory, whether they be understood and enjoyed through divine teaching or not. The peculiar character of John's Gospel has been dwelt upon by many. Many have pointed out how the glory which passes before us in that gospel is the glory of Christ in His highest divine titles and relations; "the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Sweetly has it been shown, moreover, that while no other gospel so freely unfolds this highest Godhead-glory of Christ, no other shows the sinner in such immediate contact with Him, receiving of His fullness. These and other leading features of the book, though never losing their interest, have yet to numbers become familiar truth. What the writer would now suggest may bear no comparison in importance with these chief characteristics of this gospel; but nothing is lost which contributes in ever so small a degree to acquaintance with the precious record of the glory of Him of whom it is said, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

In perusing any book, inspired or uninspired, if we find certain words occurring often enough to awaken attention to the fact, and then, on examination, discover that they are thus used throughout the book, we immediately conclude that they either express its great theme and object, or at least that which is very closely related thereto. Reading thus the Gospel of John, certain words can scarcely fail to impress the mind with the frequency of their use; while a comparison with the other evangelists confirms the conviction that the words in question do really bring out what is in closest connection with the great leading subject. For instance, the word life meets the eye almost at the beginning of the book, reappears most prominently in chapter 3, and afterward,

indeed with such frequency as to awaken the inquiry, Can this be one of the leading words in this gospel? Can it have any characteristic force? Let us see. But, before comparing this gospel with the others in this respect, we do well to remember that there are more words than one in the New Testament rendered life. One, ζω■, means life, in the strict, absolute sense. I speak only of the use of this, and other words in the New Testament. Another, ψυχ■, soul, is frequently represented by the word life; but it is not the natural, ordinary use of the word; and if it were, it is as often so given in John as in any other of the gospels. The word β■ος, used for life, in the secondary sense of living, or way of living, does not occur in our gospel at all. It is to the first word, ζω■, life in its absolute sense, that our inquiry relates. It occurs in Matthew seven times; in Mark, four times; in Luke, six times; and in John, thirty-six times. Its force and bearing, as thus characterizing John, may be estimated by such passages as, "In Him was life;" "Not perish, but have everlasting life;" "Passed from death unto life;" "The resurrection of life;" "I am the bread of life;" "I am come that they might have life;" "That He should give eternal life;" "That, believing, ye might have life through His name." Is it nothing that in the midst of this world of death, the One who has life in Himself has been here to manifest it in His own person, and to impart it to us who were dead in sins? Nor has His rejection by the world, and His ascension on high, interrupted for a moment this outflow of life from Him to dead sinners. He is glorified of the Father, who has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father "has given" Him.

But let us turn to another word: love. Here, also, we have two words (■γαπ■ω and φιλ■ω), each with its shade of meaning, rendered to love in the English New Testament. Taking both these words, with those immediately related to them, such as the noun love, we find one or other of them in Matthew twelve times; in Mark, five times; in Luke, fifteen times; and in John, fifty-six times. Nor can we doubt the force of such words as characterizing this gospel, in view of such passages as the following: "God so loved the world;" "Now, Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus;" "Having loved His own which were in the world;" "One of His disciples, whom Jesus loved;" "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another;" "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him;" "That the world may know that I love the Father;" "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." Life and love! Precious words! Life the gift of love. Divine love, in the person of the Son, bestowing a life, not only eternal in its duration, but of such a nature that the love wherewith the Father loved the Son can now rest on those of whom He said, addressing the Father, "And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

But in what sphere does the revelation of this love take place? True it is that none profit by it vitally and everlastingly, but they in whom the native opposition of the heart is overcome by almighty grace, in the positive communication of life. But is it only among God's ancient people Israel that such persons are found? Are they the only inheritors of this blessedness, so immeasurably surpassing their fruitful land, the covenanted portion of their tribes? Let us see. The word world is quite as characteristic of our gospel as either of those which have been under consideration. We stop not to notice the word α■■v, sometimes translated world, but intrinsically referring more to duration than to the world itself, absolutely considered. "The times which pass over it," the world morally viewed, is what it signifies. The word κ■σμος—the world literally, including both the earth and its human inhabitants, occurs in Matthew nine times, in Mark three times, in Luke three times, and in John seventy-nine times. How it is used, the reader may judge from such instances as—

“God so loved the world;” “The Savior of the world;” “I am the light of the world;” “Now is the judgment of this world;” “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world;” “The world seeth Me no more;” “The prince of this world;” “I have overcome the world;” “I pray not for the world;” “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;” “The world hath not known Thee.” Could it be more evident than it is, that when the Eternal Word, the only-begotten Son, was made flesh and dwelt among men, the question was one which concerned not Israel alone, or Israel more than others, but the whole world. It was towards the world the love of God was shown in the gift of His only-begotten Son. It was as the Savior of the world that the blessed Lord Jesus appeared, and as the light of the world He shone; and now that He has left the world, and returned to the Father who sent Him, He has left the world under the solemn responsibility of rejecting Him, and of not knowing the Father, of whose love He was both the messenger, the gift, and the expression. If He had tears for Jerusalem, and said, “How often would I have gathered thy children together, but ye would not,” with what feelings did He bid farewell to the world, towards which such love had been shown, and by which such love had been repulsed and trodden under foot! But there is one other word in its comparative use illustrative of the difference between this gospel and the others. It is the word πιστῶ, to believe. We have it in Matthew eleven times, in Mark fifteen times, in Luke eight times, and in John ninety-nine times. Nor does this amazing disparity exhibit the whole amount of the difference. Six out of the eleven occurrences of the word in Matthew give it in connection with miracles, or in reference to false prophets, or in the lips of ungodly scoffers; so of eight passages in Mark, out of the fifteen that it contains; but in John the vast majority of cases in which the word is employed are those in which it expresses the believing in Christ Himself unto life eternal: “That all through Him might believe;” “To them that believe on His name;” “That whosoever believeth on Him should not perish;” “He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life;” “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins;” “Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Lord, I believe.”

It is added by the Holy Ghost to the last quotation, concerning the man that had been blind, “And he worshipped Him.” May we all have his simplicity of faith, and more of the deep joy which filled and overcame his heart in gazing with his newfound sight on the One whom he now beholds by faith as the “Son of God.” It is to faith alone that the discovery is made of His glory and His grace; and faith counts the one whom it receives as unspeakably more precious than all attendant blessings, privileges, and favors, vast and unutterable as these may be. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

Thus have we seen the life revealed in Christ, and bestowed by Him as the gift of the Father’s love in Him, not to any class or nation privileged by descent, but to all to whom it is given to believe on Him throughout the wide world. To that world itself, indeed, was the coming down to it of God’s well-beloved Son, the expression of a love on God’s part, which has no measure but the gift that it bestowed. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Never, till at the moment of now perusing it, had it been noticed by the writer, that in this one verse all our four words are found—life, love, world, believing! Thus does it gather, as into one focus, the light shed throughout the book from the person, mission, and work, the life, death, and resurrection-victory of the Son of God.

In turning to chapter 6, one point it is important to consider; that is, the contrast between the way in which Christ is presented here, and in the previous chapter. Life, in its communication by Him, and its reception by us, is the theme of both chapters; but in the fifth He is seen in full Godhead-title

and glory, as the Source and Dispenser of the life sovereignly imparted by Him to us. The recipient of the life is regarded as entirely passive, and called into life by the Almighty, new-creating voice of the Son of God. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Here there is nothing in the case of the sinner but the powerlessness of death itself, till the deep silence is broken by the voice of the Son of God, who never thus speaks in vain. His voice makes itself heard in the soul, till then dead, but no longer dead as it hears the voice of the Son of God. It lives. "They that hear shall live." But we read here of no exercises or feelings, no desires or sense of need, of which Christ is the object. It is Christ in divine title and competency, as the Son of God, who speaks, and the soul, till then dead, hears and lives. But in chapter 6 our Lord is seen in the place of humiliation He had assumed as man, "come down from heaven," and the object thus of those desires, and of that sense of need, of which the quickened soul is conscious, but conscious, mark, because of the sin and ruin which it knew not till the voice of the Son of God broke in on its deep sleep of death. It is not always, perhaps not often, that these things can be distinguished in fact. The discovery of Christ in the soul awakens perhaps the first sense of desire after Him, producing thus the hunger and thirst which He only, in further discoveries of Himself and of His work, can appease. But though this may be true in principle, as it surely is, the soul, while going through this passage in its history, is too much occupied with itself to distinguish very accurately the order of its experiences. What is of infinitely greater moment is the truth by which, instrumentally, they are produced; and this, blessed be God! we have in all its fullness and variety in the Scriptures under review, and other portions of God's Holy Word.

In the early part of our chapter, we find our Lord fulfilling, in the midst of Israel, the predictions of Psalm 132, where, in connection with Jehovah's choice of Zion, and placing David's son upon the throne, we read, "I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread." But though Jesus be thus manifested as the heir of all the glories prophetically unfolded in the psalm, He is not here taking that place. Israel and the earth were as yet unfit for this; and God's time for it had not arrived. Hence Jesus retires before the urgency awakened by His own act in this feeding of the multitude. When they would have taken Him by force to make Him a king "He departed again into a mountain Himself alone." Indicating thus that He would be on high during the postponement of His kingdom, His absence was continued until His disciples were in great trouble through a storm by which they were overtaken in crossing the lake. Jesus rejoins them with words of comfort, "and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." This episode does not so much refer to the church, or to the saints composing it, as to the Jewish remnant in days to come. The return to them of the now absent but exalted Messiah will both hush the storm which will be threatening their total overthrow, and conduct them at once into the haven of rest. The heavenly saints will be taken from amid the whole scene of trial and of conflict, to be with their Lord whom they meet in the air.

All this, however, is but introductory to the great subject of the chapter, which is linked with these details by the inquiry of those who next day followed our Lord to the other side of the lake. They seem to have been swayed by the most sordid motives, with which they are pointedly charged by the Lord. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for Him hath God

the Father sealed.” If they would come after Him, and this was all the “labor” they had performed, He would have them come for that which would endure. Not the perishing sustenance of a life which shortens each moment of its existence, but the imperishable food of an imperishable life, which it was the great errand and business of the Son of Man to give. Son of Man He is, blessed be His name, and not simply Son of God; but in this place of humiliation to which He had stooped, how had the Father singled Him out from the whole race of mankind, setting upon Him alone the seal which marked Him out as the object of the Father’s perfect approval and infinite delight. Believers are now, since the resurrection and ascension of the Lord, sealed; but it is in Christ that they are thus distinguished. “In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” Christ was sealed because of His intrinsic perfections; we, through our identification with Him in the place He has taken as having accomplished redemption. But the verse under consideration brings us to the Son of Man as giving “meat which endureth unto everlasting life.”

They who could follow Christ for loaves only, seek to excuse themselves for the neglect of this better gift. “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” is their next question. In what lovely, patient grace, does the Lord reply, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” Is He the One who, of all that ever trod this earth, was counted worthy to be sealed of God the Father? How evident, then, that to believe on Him is that which God must approve, and without which nothing else can be accepted in His sight.

The only answer of the people is an inquiry after signs, with a reference to the manna in their fathers’ days, which seems intended to depreciate, by comparison, the miracle of the day before. It is as though they would say, “If you would have us believe in you as the sent One of God, you must show us greater works than these. You have fed five thousand once; our fathers, in Moses’ day, ate manna for forty years: as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” Then did our Lord begin to unfold the great subject of the chapter. The reasonings of Jewish pride and unbelief gave Him the occasion; but, dealing with these in the most unsparing way, how does He, at the same time present Himself as the Object on which any hungry, thirsty, fainting, perishing one might feed and live forever. “A full Christ for empty sinners” indeed. These Jews were not such, and so went empty away. But how many fainting ones, perishing with hunger, have here been regaled, and found in Jesus the bread of life.

The remainder of our chapter affords us a threefold view of this blessed one. Christ incarnate—Christ slain—Christ ascended. May we have grace to listen, to receive, and to worship.

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” How simple, and yet how weighty and conclusive His answer to their unexpressed thoughts about Moses, as though Moses were shown, by the miracle of the manna, to be greater than our Lord. “Moses gave you not that bread from heaven.” He was but a receiver of it, like the people themselves, who subsisted on it for forty years. It was God’s gift, and despised, alas! by those who lived on it, just as “the true bread” was now being despised by their descendents. Our Lord does not pursue the subject of the manna. He does not say, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but My Father did. No; He would not speak of the manna in connection with the Father’s name, as though the import of that name were disclosed by the gift from heaven of bread for six hundred thousand men and their families for forty

years. Was this more, in reality, than His feeding all His creatures every day and every hour? "Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." So vast are the Creator's stores, and so easy their application in providence to the creature's need. But the Father's name is linked with deeper wonders far. All the riches of grace are told out in the revelation of that name. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." What was that? The answer is at hand. "For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." The Father's provision for a dying world was to send from heaven His only begotten Son. His appearing here was as the lowly Son of Man. The fact was of worldwide interest. All alike needed this bread from heaven, and all alike were welcome. Not to Jew or Gentile, as distinct and privileged, but to the whole race as perishing, was this bounty sent. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9); "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. 5:19) But the world would not be reconciled. It had no taste, no appetite for this "bread from heaven." There might be the momentary movement of the affections by His gracious words, leading some present to cry, "Lord, evermore give us this bread;" but it was only to make their rejection of Him more manifest and decisive when they came to understand His meaning. But let us listen to His words.

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Dear reader, do you understand these words? Has your soul-hunger been appeased by this "bread from heaven," this "bread of life"? Has your soul-thirst been quenched by receiving in Him and of Him the water of life? Or is it possible that one who reads these lines should fall under the condemnation of the words next uttered by Christ? "But I said unto you, that ye also have seen Me, and believed not." No language so cutting as that of rejected mercy, repulsed and slighted love. Here was this blessed One; His errand to this world nothing less than to be the expression of His Father's love, and the Savior of lost men. He bore His credentials in every gracious word that fell from His lips, and every action of His perfect spotless life. One of these, the miracle of the loaves, had attracted after Him the multitude, who from selfish motives had followed Him across the lake. They confessed thus that they had "seen" Him; but, alas! they "believed not." When they understood that He was the bread of life, they show plainly it was not for such food that they had come. They would have had another meal such as on the day before; but for the One who gave it they had no heart. He had come to save them, if they would, from a worse death than that by hunger, but they had no sense of their danger and need in this respect, and therefore had no heart for Jesus as their Savior; and they would not receive Him. Nor would any, with Christ shown to them thus and nothing more. These men were not worse than others. Their unbelief was manifest and declared, and He treats them, therefore, as unbelievers, as rejecters; but this is what would be the result in every case, were we left to our own thoughts of Christ, when thus seen as "come down from heaven."

Thank God, there is something more. Christ had not only come, as bringing life and love so near to the world, to men as such, that only by refusing the life and repelling the love could they hold on in their sins; He had come to fulfill the counsels of His Father's love in the sovereign gift of life, as shown in chapter 5; and of this He now proceeds to speak, though still as "come down" and here in humiliation, the object for faith to receive and appropriate. Such faith, it was evident, had no place in man's heart; but God could give it, and would sovereignly in His grace. "All that the Father

giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me, I will in nowise cast out.” How humiliating and heartbreaking for us, that in the presence of incarnate life and love in the Person of the incarnate Son of God, no one would have come to Him, no one have been benefited by His mission, had there not been those who were given Him of the Father, and on whose coming therefore He could securely reckon. Man’s will would, in each individual, have held out against Christ, had not the Father resolved that He should have some as the trophies of His victory and the reward of His coming down from heaven. Alas that our deadness to such love should have called forth such sighs as seem to breathe in these words of Jesus! Is it not as though He were accounting to Himself for the marvels of human unbelief? As though saying, After all, it is but what I might have counted on. Nothing will affect man’s stony heart, save where My Father’s grace effectually intervenes, and on that I may securely calculate. All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me. And then to see how perfectly He fills the servant-place He had taken. For any now to come to Him is the proof of their being among those given to Him of the Father; so He may well declare of such that He will cast none out. The heart to come to Jesus is the sure sign to Him, had that been needed, of His Father’s gracious working; and therefore He is but obedient to His Father’s will in receiving, without question as to the past, all who come to Him. “Him that cometh to Me, I will in nowise cast out.” Precious words! Rich has been the comfort they have yielded to many an otherwise desponding one; but how greatly is their value enhanced when the coming to Christ is seen, not as an act of man’s fickle will, but as the effect of the Father’s drawing to Jesus of one given to Him in the counsels of that Father’s love before the foundation of the world. Then, too, as we have just seen, the reception of such a one by the Savior, irrespective of every consideration beside, is not merely the fruit of His compassion for the sinner, but of His grateful obedient acceptance, as the servant of His Father’s will, of the one sent to Him, brought to Him, by the unseen drawings of that Father’s love. All thus rests, not upon any fancied good in the sinner, but upon the Father’s choice and the Son’s obedient love. “For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will; but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” How He thus discloses that a far deeper and more important work had been entrusted to Him than that of satisfying Israel’s poor with bread: no less a charge than that of raising up at the last day all given to Him of the Father, without losing one. Blessed Lord! to whom besides could this charge have been entrusted?

But, while disclosing, as above, that His real errand was one not depending for its issues on man’s will, known already to be so perverse as in every case to reject the Savior, an errand, too, embracing the safe production by Christ in resurrection-blessedness of all given to Him by the Father, it is touching to find how solicitously He leaves wide open the door to anyone anywhere who is disposed to enter. He may not, as yet, be able to account for the change in his own condition, as we have seen it accounted for by the Savior; he is not the less welcome, or his final safety the less certain and unfailing. “And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

The great stumbling-block to the Jews at that time was His professing to have come down from heaven, just as afterward, in Paul’s day, the doctrine of “Christ crucified” was “to the Jews a stumbling-block;” and for precisely the same reason. Their pride disdained the being indebted to

one so lowly; and they were so self-satisfied as to see no need for one to come from heaven, and much less for one to die upon the cross, to meet their case, and be their Deliverer and Redeemer. Their case, as they thought, was by no means so desperate as this. They could not have denied their national subjection to the stranger's yoke, and a "great prophet" to have stirred up the people to crowd around the standard of some great commander who would have led them on to victory over their Roman oppressors; this would have been a Messiah to their mind. But for a plain homely man, reputed to be son of a carpenter of Nazareth, to profess to have come down from heaven, and to speak of Himself as the bread of life, engaging to raise up his followers at the last day; in other words, for the lowly Jesus to present Himself as the Savior of their souls, and the Giver of everlasting life, this was a deliverance and a Deliverer of which they felt no need, and for whom they had no relish. They did not hunger for such bread; they did not thirst for such life-giving drafts. "The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that He saith, I came down from heaven?" They could understand that a heavenly existence prior to His being a man on earth was implied in this language; in other words, that it was divine glory, veiled in His lowly place and condition as Son of Man, which was in these words declared by Him as His. With this implied claim, they contrast what they suppose to be His origin, and inquire, "How is it then that He saith, I came down from heaven?"

In answer to all such cavilings, the Lord only again retires into His own consciousness of how the case really stood: "Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." No one hungers for the bread of life so as to come to the Savior except as drawn by a sense of urgent need, which exists in none but those whom the Father draws. The prophets had declared of all who should inherit Israel's promised blessings in the latter day "And they shall be all taught of God." This Scripture our Lord quotes, and again consoles Himself with the assurance: "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." All in Israel who had inwardly heard God's voice not only came to Jesus, but were overjoyed to do so. Take Nathanael for an instance, in John 1:49. It was these dealings of God with the soul under the fig tree, these humbling discoveries of self and sin leading to guileless confession of total ruin, that accounted for any coming to Christ. But, as recollecting the sense which might have been put on His words, the Lord adds, "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He which is of God, He hath seen the Father." What treasures do these few words unfold. However souls may be taught of God, drawn of the Father, and consequently come to Christ, it is not that the Father is immediately revealed, so as to be seen. There was no incarnation of the Father, as of the Son. He abides in unmanifested Godhead. And only in the Son, who stooped to "come down from heaven," and be here a man upon earth, is the Father to be seen. "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He which is of God, He hath seen the Father." Infinite distinction between this blessed Son of Man and all men on the earth, whither in grace He had humbled Himself to come. He had seen the Father. In the depths of that eternity in which the Word had been "with God," in which the "eternal life" was "with the Father," had He who now humbly speaks of Himself as "He which is of God," "seen" what no creature can—"seen the Father." What unfathomable secrets of love, and blessedness, and glory are wrapped up in these short, simple words! Tread softly, O my soul, for surely this is holy ground! And here He was—He who had seen the Father—He was here to make Him known; He had become incarnate for this very end. He had taken flesh, come down from heaven, or He would still, equally with the Father,

have been beyond the ken of mortals, beyond the creature's sight. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Who else could? And how else could we ever have known Him? How else could the light of the Father's love and grace have beamed into our dark hearts, and shed its luster on our whole upward path to the abodes of which the Savior afterward said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." When there with our adorable Jesus, and privileged to behold His glory, how will there be connected therewith the witness of what He had known and enjoyed there from all eternity! "For Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

From these depths He returns, and with what perfect ease and grace, to the simplest presentation of Himself as the bread of life. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life." How simple the way in which the Savior is received. Just as a hungry man with bread before him asks no questions, makes no demur, but eats and lives, so the Savior, with a hungry soul before Him, needs nothing to commend Him to such a soul's grateful, adoring reception. But where are such? Alas! it was the lack of all taste for Christ, the self-complacency which felt no need of Him, that prevented these blinded Jews from receiving Him. And where is there an appetite for Him now? Precious bread of life He doubtless is, perfectly adapted to nourish and sustain divine life in man, even if that life be in its most infantile stage, the very earliest moments of its communication by grace to the soul. But without this, what is there? Death! A corpse has no appetite; it neither hungers nor thirsts. No more does the soul that is still dead in sins, dead to God. It is of the woman who seeks her happiness on earth that the word is spoken, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. 5:6); but it would surely be as true to say that he who thus lives is also dead. Dear reader, if fashion or pleasure, the world in any of its forms, be all we wish, all we seek, what can the bread of life be to us in that state? Insipid and distasteful indeed in our esteem. Christ will not help us to win the prize in any race of ambition or pursuit of pleasure. He who passed by the nature of angels, and all the gradations of human rank, to be a working man, a carpenter, and to be known on earth as these Jews tauntingly designated Him, "The son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know," He is not one in whom pride can find its food. And as to pleasure, what can they who seek it find in the One who "pleased not Himself," who tells us in this very chapter, "For I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me"? And yet, solemnly as the fact begins to declare itself, that between this incarnate One and those who surrounded Him there was not one thought, feeling, or motive in common, how graciously He continues to urge every consideration which might be adapted to produce in them an appetite, to awaken desires after Himself, the living Bread. They had referred to the manna, and covertly to Moses as the giver of it, in order to depreciate Christ. He returns to that subject now, to press on their attention the contrast for themselves. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." Wondrous words! The manna, testimony as it was of God's power and grace, and type indeed of Christ Himself, in its actual use did but nourish for a few years that poor, fleeting, feverish, forfeited life, which begins at our birth and ends at our death. A taper wasting from the moment it begins to shine; "a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away;" is it for this, or the support of it, or for the brief pleasure that it affords, that men toil, fret, weary themselves, despise heaven with all its glories,

refuse or neglect Christ and His great salvation? Yes. It was so in our Lord's day on earth. It is so still. O that His words (thank God! "they are spirit and they are life") may reach the heart of some one who cons these pages; the words in which He contrasts with everything in this poor, perishable life, that interminable existence in unutterable peace and joy, that "everlasting life," which all receive who receive Him. Hungry soul! can you not feed on Jesus? As you would appease your natural hunger on the suited food, can you not find in Jesus what meets your entire case? What satisfies your every wish? Here is an undying life, an unwasting one; to "live forever" is the effect of feeding on this bread from heaven. "That a man may eat thereof, and not die;" "if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." Has the worldling anything to compare with this? Do his most feverish dreams of happiness on earth embrace the element of unending continuance? It is just for him the one element wanting, the lack of which spoils all the rest. How passing wonderful, that the One who stood before these Jews as the lowliest and poorest of men had the full consciousness then of having a life to bestow, to communicate, which death cannot touch, and which is, in its own proper nature, everlasting life. He is no longer here in humiliation, speaking such words of grace and truth as these; but He has not ceased to be the Giver of this life, Himself the fullness of the life He gives. "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him."

To gather up a little what has been under review. We have here the "Son of Man," one who is really partaker of flesh and blood, a man, conversing with the men who had followed Him across the lake. We have this Son of Man—the sealed One of God the Father. He is the sent One, too; and the first thing for any one who would please God, is to "believe on Him whom He hath sent." He has meat, or food, to give, moreover, which endures to everlasting life. In the conversation with the parties just adverted to, the mystery of His presence here is declared, and many of the moral traits of that life of which He is the full expression, and which He was here to communicate, are either stated in words, or come out in practical display. He was from heaven—the Incarnate One. He was the Father's gift, a character in which He delights in this gospel to speak of Himself. He was the true bread, the real and only nourishment for divine life in man, had it only been there. What perfect adaptation to man's need in this bread from heaven! He who is that bread gives life, moreover, as well as sustains it where it is. But where is it, alas! save as sovereignly bestowed, when all would equally have treated it with disdain? They had seen Him and had not believed. There is the heartiest welcome, an open door—none refused; he who comes is no more to hunger; he who believes is no more to thirst; but the Savior has to take refuge from universal rejection by mankind, in the certainty that all would come to Him who were given to Him of the Father. The outflow of His own love in receiving all such, and casting none out who came, is thus seen as the perfection of obedience to His Father, whose will, not His own, He had come from heaven to do. How the heart bows in contemplation of such obedience. He who could speak of raising up His people at the last day, as though it were as easy and simple an act of obedience as any that He performed while here, speaks of Himself as having it in charge not to stop short of this. "This is the Father's will... that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but raise it up at the last day." Blessed Jesus! how safe to be confided thus to thee! But more than this, this safety appertains to all who see Him and believe on Him. "The last Adam is a quickening Spirit." Though it may be of His resurrection-place that this is spoken, such is the fullness of life in His person, that the eye that rests on Him receives, with the beams of His countenance, that life which these beams impart. To believe on Him is to have everlasting life. The drawings of the Father, His secret

teachings, secure that they shall come to Him who are the gift to Him of the Father's love. The Father Himself, undisclosed save to the Son (He who is of God), draws to the Son by that sense of need which is met by Him alone. He is the bread of life, not a perishable life like that of which even the manna in the desert was the food, but everlasting life. What unfathomable wonders these few verses disclose. The infinite grace displayed in the fact of the incarnation, how little is it pondered by our careless, frivolous hearts. And then, the perfectness of this blessed One in the place of humiliation to which He had stooped—the absoluteness of His obedience, and the delicacy of His self-hiding, self-consuming service! To these Jews He had to speak of Himself, for they challenged His claims, and invidiously compared Him with Moses, and His miracle with that of the manna. He answers as feeling the reflection on His Father, not on Himself. "Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." Blessed Savior! grant us daily and hourly to feed by faith on Thyself, in all the perfectness in which Thou wast displayed to the eye of God while sojourning in this vale of tears.

But our attention is claimed by deeper wonders still. The incarnation is one marvel and mystery and glory of the gospel; the cross is the other. Any third miracle to compare with these, the records of eternity afford not. There has been none such in eternity past; there can be none such in eternity to come. The Word made flesh! The Holy One made sin! But why was this? Was it not enough that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him? Had this been all, not one sinner of Adam's race would have been found on high to sing the praises of His Savior-God. Christ incarnate, had there been no deeper mystery of love, would have shown more than anything beside man's hatred to God, and the utter hopelessness of his case. The blessed One well knew this when He came into the world, but now the proof was before His eyes. The more His intrinsic excellence, His moral perfectness was displayed, the more manifest it became that between Him and fallen man there was not one moral quality in common. It is not, as others have observed, a question of degree, a race in which one immeasurably out-distances another. No; it is contrariety—contrast—of the most absolute kind. All that men value and seek, He declined and shunned. For all on which His heart was set, they had no relish whatever. Men seek their own glory—He sought His Father's alone. Men do their own will—His Father's was His only business. Men love those who resemble themselves, and such as love them—He loved where there were no qualities He could approve, and where there was hatred to Himself which thirsted for His blood. To think of One, who for the three-and-thirty years of His sojourn on earth never did one thing to serve Himself, spare Himself, exalt Himself; but for every moment of His life was and did, spake, and thought, and felt, exactly as God would have Him. Let a man's eyes be opened, as they are, when his ears are unstopped by the voice of God's Son; let his opened eyes rest on this blessed person, as the divine records set Him forth, and what is the result? "Woe is me," he exclaims, "I am utterly hopeless now! Hard and vain have been my struggles to win life by keeping the law; but now, as I look on this moral picture, every trait, every line, convicts me of being exactly the opposite. I admire His ways; I could sit and gaze on Him, and wonder; and if I could be like Him! but, alas! every attempt deepens my conviction that it is all in vain. If Christ be what God delights in—and He is—He never can delight in me, for His ways and mine are further than east and west asunder. What is to become of me, wretched man that I am!"

What indeed must have become of any of us, had Christ only glorified His Father in coming down to sojourn here as a living man? But this was not the whole: He Himself assures us it was not. "I

am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give, is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” As come down, as incarnate, He was the bread of God, His Father’s gift, but there was bread which He Himself would give, even His flesh, which He would give for the life of the world. Now this giving of His flesh was the laying down of His life, the yielding Himself up to death, that He might become to sinners—to fallen, perishing men—what bread would be to a crowd of persons perishing with hunger. It is in a slain, Christ alone that sinners can find what meets their deep and solemn need. Well may our need be met where God has been perfectly glorified about our sin. Convicted by His life of total contrariety to Him in every moral trait, whither shall we turn but to the cross, where this same blessed One gives His flesh that we may live? Did His love go even to such lengths as these? It did. When nothing less than the death under wrath of a sin-atoning victim of infinite value could meet our need as guilty ones, or justify God in justifying us, His love was found equal to the emergency, and He gave His flesh for the life of the world. That such is His meaning comes out more emphatically in His reply to the next cavil of those who stood round about Him. “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” was their carnal, foolish inquiry. He stops not to explain, but repeats and amplifies His previous declaration, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.” (John 6:53)

Jesus Trusting

The moment, beloved friends, that we have believed in the Lord Jesus, everything that would comfort, that would tend to give us joy and confidence, finds its only source to be in Him; and also everything that would try us, everything that would condemn and search the conscience, all these things end in simple and entire blessing because of Him. So that even that truth from which we naturally shrink, as showing what should be the moral perfectness of the saint, when we see it according to the place in which we are in Christ, is sure to lead to blessing and to joy.

Now it is thus that we have to read such a psalm as this.

There are few parts of the Holy Scriptures that show us more entirely what our own failure and weakness is, and how we have stumbled, than the Psalms, because they describe the perfectness of One who was unblemished before God, who never stumbled. Therefore all those things which show His perfectness, both outwardly and inwardly, must be full of discomfort and discouragement to us, if looked at apart from their real object. If we seek to establish our security before God, by getting the experience which the Psalms give, we must say, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." No soul could get solid peace. Yet many are endeavoring to do so; many are seeking the same lineaments in themselves, the same features of experience which are depicted in the Psalms, and then judging of themselves by this as a standard. For instance, that in the next psalm: "Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence; let Thine eyes behold the things that are equal. Thou hast proved mine heart; Thou hast visited me in the night; Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." (vss. 2, 3) Now, inasmuch as imperfection is sure to be found in our ways and inward feelings, these feelings can never form the stable ground of peace in the presence of God. Therefore it is not until we see that every claim of God's holiness has been met, and perfectly answered by Jesus; that when God tried (as He did) His reins and His heart, He found nothing that did not perfectly suit His holiness in Jesus: it is not, I say, until we see this, and know that Jesus had entered into the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore, in consequence of this, that our joy is full. Then there is joy, because it is said "for us." (Heb. 9:24) And this is true of the one who has but touched the hem of the garment of Jesus. There never was an ailing or sorrowing heart that looked at Jesus that did not find God's salvation in Him—in Him who is now made higher than the heavens.

All these psalms thus become the portion of the soul that has faith in Jesus. It is not by going on, treading step after step in experience, the path that Jesus trod, that we enter life. No; we reach it at once through Him who has trodden all these steps, and who is now with the Father. We are placed immediately in the glory which Christ has attained. We should read the Psalms as those who have reached acceptance, and blessing, and glory too (in one sense) in Him; and then we shall find ourselves placed in circumstances here in which we have to say, as He said, "Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee do I put My trust."

These are words for saved ones to use. Jesus did not use these words, as needing to be saved from wrath. He came from the Father into this world, He stood here as the heavenly One—"the

Son of Man who is in heaven;” He was never less than that, and yet He was in altogether different circumstances, and could say, “Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee do I put My trust.” And thus we, who are placed in the midst of evil and of danger from enemies who seek to tempt and to hinder us, can use this prayer. There are many circumstances, in the midst of which we stand from day to day, beneath which Satan lurks, and through which we are brought into conflict with him. Now we may either yield to Satan in these things, or honor God in overcoming him. Our feet will slide, and Satan will vanquish us, else we shall bring the power of God into them by faith, and thus triumph.

The Lord Jesus always applied the mind of God to present circumstances, and looked to Him to supply the needed strength from hour to hour. He did not stand alone, for as man it was not suited that He should stand independently and alone. He was the One who had His ear opened morning by morning to hear as the learned, the obedient servant, doing not His own will, but the will of another, and standing in dependence upon Him. And see what blessed communion with the Lord Jesus must be felt by the soul that is ready to follow Him in this path. He who knows in any little measure what this path is has to say constantly, “Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust;” he has to find his place now where that of the Lord Jesus was.

I have said we reach not salvation, peace, or glory by obedience; but there is much joy in thus doing the will of another. There was joy to Jesus in taking the place of obedience; it was the only place in which the great enemy could be triumphed over. Therefore He took it, and He found blessing to be in it.

Now, dear friends, that heart cannot be in communion with Jesus that loves and chooses any other place. A saint even may stand in independence of God, and seek to manage circumstances himself; and such a one is blessed; for those whom God has blessed are blessed. He never ceases to bless those who believe in Jesus. But still, these accepted ones may be walking so carelessly, may be standing so in the place of independence, as not to be in communion with Him who chose the place of dependence on God. If so, they will be unconscious of the difficulty of acting rightly in the circumstances around them, because it is generally, when there is the attempt to depend upon and trust in God, that the pressure around is felt; and then the blessed cry ascends from the heart— “Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust.”

There is no cry more honorable to the saint. It was a cry that it suited Jesus to utter. Because He took the place of obedience, and because He therefore felt the pressure of circumstances, He said, “Preserve Me, O God...” So when the soul is brought into temptation and conflict, it may be, in the midst of Satan’s cruel arrows—for they fall very terribly on those who are seeking to walk on in obedience—this cry ascends from the saint to God. And no cry is more acceptable to God. It comes from the Spirit of Christ within those who are in conflict with the evil. There is in it the recognition of God and of need—of need because we are in tried humanity; and this is contrasted with God. Though Jesus was truly God, yet “being found in fashion as a man”—a perfect and unspotted man—He “suffered being tempted.”

“O My soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art My Lord.” So difficult a lesson is it to learn to say this that the soul of Jesus alone could say it and abide in it. He said it in steadfastness of soul, and He did not decline from it. He acknowledged Jehovah, and said unto Him, “Thou art my Lord.” This is contrary to all idolatry; contrasting the LORD with everything that claims dominion over our will, our affections, our desires, our feelings; the putting down all these idols, and placing Jehovah

supreme over all. Now this is a thing never found perfectly in any, save in Jesus—giving God the supremacy in all we do, and putting down our own will, both in the choice of the means, and as to the end, in everything giving up our own wills to God's. But just in proportion as it is found in the saints, happy are they; they will escape ten thousand cares, ten thousand trials, which come upon them when they are setting up any other master. Where this is done there is likeness to Jesus, and the partaking of His joy. On the contrary, whenever anything gets into the place of pre-eminence which the Lord alone should occupy, there is sure to be disorder in the soul's affections. This thought ought to humble and search the saint, because he was not only weak, and miserable, and worthless in the flesh, but God has given him the Holy Spirit that he may be strong, and able as to all things, through Christ strengthening him. And if our hearts, dear friends, tell us that it is not so with us, let us try ourselves by this. I believe it must humble, bring very low, test obedience, break down many a self-complacent thought. Yes, I am persuaded that if applied in faithfulness to our souls it would produce that chastened, soft, humble feeling that is often wanting amongst the saints.

In this subjection we find the "goodness"—the moral perfectness of understanding, of will, and of action, in Jesus. Everything that flowed from the understanding, the affections, and the will in Jesus had perfection in it, and this constituted His "goodness." But what did He say of His goodness? Did it give Him joy? Yes; but (He says) this goodness existing in me is not to produce any change in thy condition, O God! "My goodness extendeth not to thee; but" —Whose condition then is changed by it?— "to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all My delight."

Now, this is always a part of the faith of the servants of God, to see that there are those here below, "in the earth," who are a royal priesthood, in whom, when the earthen pitcher is broken, instantly will shine forth the brightness of the light which is in them. Sense only sees the earthen pitcher; but faith is quick in discerning the pulse that beats feebly even towards Jesus, and that loves to think of His ways. It may be difficult sometimes to discern who these "holy ones" are, but wherever there is any confession of the lip to the name of Jesus and the evidence of faith in the heart towards Him, we see one in whom is Christ's "delight," one whom He loves as Himself. The grudging, evil, jealous feeling of the world, and of the flesh in the believer (for they are all the same), loves to detect evil—cruelly to analyze and describe (and Satan is ever ready to help in doing this) the follies and the weakness of the saints. It loves to dissect their actions, and then to boast itself, because it thinks it is not quite so weak and evil as another. How different to the Spirit of Christ! Nothing so marks the possession of the Spirit of Christ as that love which is not jealous, which vaunteth not itself, but which delights to find out even the weakest and feeblest of those whom it sees to be the "holy ones." Do you then count it your joy (I would have you try yourselves by this, beloved friends); see whether you find it blessed to be bound up with the church of God, closely, in thought, in feeling, and affection, as well as in outward manifestation, owning them to be of God, excellent and glorious, those of whom Christ says, "In whom is all My delight." On them His "goodness" rests, it was for them; well may they be considered "excellent!" You know the Lord Jesus says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto ME." Nothing has a more practical effect on the Christian than day by day to be thinking of Christ, not only as He is in heaven, but also as being in His saints here below, so that we may care for them, and say, "In whom is all my delight." When we thus link God and the saints,

when, in looking up to God, we can say, Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust; and, down here on the saints, in whom is my delight, the soul finds itself in the place of practical blessing. Then the disappointments, even which we meet with will only be as the seed falling into the ground and dying, that it may bring forth much fruit. No seed falling thus into the ground will perish: though there be long patience needed in waiting for it, the fruit will come and yield a plentiful harvest.

Now, contrasted with this is the condition of those of whom it is said, “Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into My lips.” It is the contrast of those who are of the world with those who are of God. The Lord would have no fellowship with these. He says, I will have no communion with the things with which they have communion. “Drink-offerings of blood” is the character of their holy things. They “hasten after another god;” no matter what the measure of their departure, their faces are set another way.

And then, verse 5, we find his own happy relation to God— “The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance.” But this was not more true of Him than it is of us. I would, dear friends, that we should meditate much on the precious thought. Our joy is in God; there are many joys and sympathies, but there is no real happiness except in God. If all the affections and joys of heaven were the portion of the soul, it would be still unhappy without God. There would be misery in heaven except God were the portion of each there. I do not attempt to explain how this will be realized; but still, if the soul be occupied with coining glory, it needs to connect this thought of God being its portion and its joy with it, otherwise the very glory itself would burden it too much, for glory is a strange thing to us.

“And of My cup.” The cup is a present thing, a present blessing. Jesus proved this because He walked in practical, present fellowship with God; and we shall prove it too in proportion as we seek to walk thus. We shall not lose blessing ultimately, but we shall lose present blessing; all will fail if we seek happiness in any other way than in knowing the LORD to be the “portion of our cup.” We may mingle many a cup for ourselves, we may seek for blessing in this thing or in that, but all will fail to promote our comfort and joy; we shall never find a full portion of blessing unless the LORD Himself be the “portion of our cup.” Nothing but God can satisfy the soul.

“Thou maintainest (that is, sustainest) My lot.” Preserving, sustaining care, is that which the soul feels it chiefly needs when looking at the danger that surrounds it. The exercised soul almost trembles at receiving any joy or blessing if it does not know that it comes from God, and is sustained for it by Him, because as the grass of the field, so it withereth. But if any soul is able to say, “This is not a cup without God, but from Him,” then there is strength and joy, and it can add, “Thou sustainest my lot.” So that whatever blessing we may receive from God—is it salvation, or the power of service, or any earthly good or blessing coming through Jesus—it is our privilege to be able to say, “Thou maintainest my lot.”

And then, just in proportion as we see the LORD to be the portion of our inheritance and of our cup, our preserver and sustainer, shall we be able to say, “The lines are fallen, unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” The saints seldom say this now. Pleasantness is little known now, and why? Because the LORD is not thus realized. But just in proportion as we know, as we cleave to God, do we find our true joy, and the “lines to have fallen” to us in “pleasant

places.”

Blessed are those who seek to realize this experience; but it is here, I repeat, the saints so frequently fail, even in the practical acknowledgment of God in their ways.

And when the soul is able to say, “I have waited on the Lord, and sought counsel,” it will also be able to “bless “ Him, as here, “I will bless the LORD who hath, given me counsel.” Now this is a happy thing. But it is only when the soul waits on God that we can expect to trace happy results in what we undertake. If we have chosen our own path, we shall find estrangement and sorrow, and we shall not be able to “bless the Lord” in the sense of this verse; for it describes the harvest springing up joyfully, in consequence of our having walked in the counsels of the LORD. We are often so wayward, so hasty, and so careless, that we do the thing for which we need direction first, and ask counsel afterward; then we cannot “bless the Lord,” who has given us counsel, though we may have to bless Him perhaps for delivering us from the folly of our own ways.

Having the LORD to counsel—not only the Word of God, but also the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, to counsel and direct, to give us His own feelings and desires—we can go forward. The saint has a secret power of judgment within himself, and often “in the night seasons,” when circumstances of excitement are still, we are instructed and admonished by the Holy Spirit. “My reins (that is, my secret thoughts) instruct me in the night seasons.” This is really a present positive blessing. The Holy Ghost dwelleth in us, the Spirit of Christ is in us, and if there were more attention to these secret admonitions, to this secret power of judgment (of course guided by the Word) we should find that we have a power of action that the world can never know.

We have seen our blessed Lord as knowing the path of sorrow, but here we see the end of it—“Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” Now, in order to understand this, we must mark the contrast between death and life, as it is said, “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me,” &c. It was after knowing separation from God that he was to be shown “the path of life” and the “fullness of joy” at God’s right hand. Now we cannot follow Jesus in His path of suffering, dear brethren, here; we can never know what He knew; for He knew wrath, and wrath is that which we have never known, can never know. We may know affliction, we may know suffering and sorrow, yet the end is sure and certain. Or we may know something of what the “path of life” is, by contrasting it with our knowledge of the path of death. None but the saints can do this. If the Spirit dwelling in us has led us to know what the path of death is, because He is the “living Spirit,” we are able to distinguish how everything fair and lovely goes to corruption, and is marked with death.

Well, all the sorrows and hindrances which we now so often know shall be done away, and we shall know what it is to see and to enter upon the “path of life” with the same feelings of joy which our blessed Lord describes in John 17. Jesus knew it, even when here, and He has left this chapter (John 17) to us, that we might be comforted by knowing the blessedness of His service and His ways, to share with Him in their circumstances, as well as in the glory hereafter. And as we shall surely know this end of blessing, we should desire not to shrink from, but to be placed in those circumstances now in which we may know something of the blessedness of walking in the ways of Jesus. The soul that is not careless, but, on the contrary, is an exercised soul, knows that the place in which Jesus walked here is the place on which the blessing of God can rest, therefore

it will desire it.

It is Thy hand, my God!

My sorrow comes from Thee;

I bow beneath Thy chastening rod,

'Tis love that bruises me.

I would not murmur, Lord;

Before Thee I am dumb;

Lest I should breathe one murmuring thought,

To Thee for help I come.

The Passage of the Red Sea

We have in these verses a little picture, drawn by the Spirit of God, of the ways of God in bringing up His people out of Egypt by the hand of Moses. And, we may say, it is just a picture of the deliverance of the church from the power of Satan, of the salvation of God, and the means by which it is brought about.

Verse 23. God had taken the tenderest care of Moses in his infancy. So in the days of our unregeneracy, God's care has been over us in a thousand ways.

Verse 24-26. A word here as to guidance through the providences of God. Many cling to providences as though they were to be the guide for faith. Nothing could be a more remarkable providence than that which placed Moses in the court of Pharaoh, but it was not the guide for the faith of Moses. Brought up as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, mighty in words and in deeds, there "Providence" had placed him. If ever there was a remarkable providence, it was in the case of Moses. After having been hid three months of his parents, till they could hide him no longer, he is put in an ark of bulrushes, among the flags by the river's brink. Thus exposed, and crying, the babe attracts the attention of Pharaoh's daughter, who, with her maidens, is brought down to the place just at the moment. She has compassion on him; listens to the suggestion of the young woman, his sister, gives him in charge to his own mother, to be nursed for her, and he becomes her son. The first thing he does, when come to years, is to give it all up. Had Moses reasoned, his reasoning might have had great scope of argument, he might have said, "God's providence has placed me here," "I can use all this influence for God's people," and the like. But he never thought of such a thing. His place was with God's people. He did not act for God's people merely; he did not patronize God's people; his place was with and amongst God's people. God's "Providence" had given him a position, which he might relinquish, but it was no guide for conscience. There may be the most plausible reasoning about a thing, but when the "eye is single," the "whole body will be full of light." Moses saw in his brethren (though a feeble people) "the people of God," and he identified them, as such, with the glory of God. That is what faith always does. They may be in a feeble and failing position, or they may be in a blessed position, that is not the question, faith identifies the people of God with the glory of God, and acts accordingly.

The children of Israel were in a very bad condition, still, they were "the people of God;" and the first thing recorded of the faith of Moses is, that he took his place amongst the afflicted people of God. If reproach was on them, it was "the reproach of Christ," and he "esteemed it greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." He reckoned with God, and this kept his soul clear of every other influence, he looked right on— "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." The light cannot shine down along another path.

Verse 27. Faith had brought Moses into a straight line with "the recompence of the reward," and, when in that path, faith enabled him to identify himself with God, to look up to God as his power. At once came the "wrath of the king." But the same faith that saw glory for him at the end of the path,

saw God for him all through the path. That is the secret of real strength. What unbelief does, is to compare ourselves and our own strength with circumstances. What faith does, is to compare God with circumstances. Take the case of the spies. (Num. 13 and 14) They said, "All the people of the land are of a great stature; and we saw the giants there, the sons of Anak, that come of the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight." If the Israelites compared their stature with that of the Anakims, they had no business there. What said Caleb and Joshua? They stilled the people, saying, "They are as bread to us; their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us, fear them not." That is, they compared these sons of Anak with God—what matter, then, whether they were giants or grasshoppers. They spoke the language of faith. It was no reasoning about circumstances; it was just simply saying, "Greater is He that is for us, than all that can be against us." God was there. That is what makes the path of faith so simple. How did David reason? He did not go and reason about the height of Goliath and about his own smallness of stature; he brought God in. 'There is an uncircumcised man,' he said, 'defying the armies of the living God'—right, and very good reasoning.

When the glory set before us leads in the way of the promises, and we take our place with the despised and afflicted people of God, the world will not like it, and the "wrath of the king" will be the consequence. Now, this is always a thing feared and trembled before, until God becomes clearly known by the soul, as a God for it.

When Pharaoh pursued after the children of Israel (Ex. 14) with all his chariots, and his horsemen, and his army he had let them go from serving him, but there was no change of heart towards them, the Lord allowed the people to be shut in between the pursuit of Pharaoh (the power of evil) and the Red Sea. They were quite shut in; and then He says, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

But if God is coming to deal with sinners, He must deal with them as what He is—a holy God. Let them be Israelites, or let them be Egyptians, He must deal with them as what He is. The judgment of God against sin must be met. God's purpose was to save Israel, and in doing that He was about to judge Egypt. But then, 'He says, if I come to deal in judgment with the Egyptians; if I come to deliver My people; I must come, such as I am; and I must, therefore, raise the question of sin.' And it is always so. When God deals with the heart, if there is a question between it and Satan's power (and, when the soul is freshly awakened, the miserable consciousness of Satan's power, the slavery of Satan's service, will often have more real power in producing exercise of heart, than all the fear of the consequences of sin) that is not the first question. God never begins there. He does deliver from it; but He never begins there. He begins by raising a question between Himself and the sinner.

The children of Israel had fallen into idolatry. They were worse than the Egyptians; they had the promises of God (Gen. 15), and were worshipping the idols of Egypt. But they felt not their sin against God. They groaned under their task-masters, and sighed by reason of their bondage. Well, in all the tender commiseration of His love, God came down and spoke to Moses, as to His having seen the affliction of His people and being about to deliver them. But, if judgment against sin was coming in, Israel must be secured from that judgment, or it would fall on them as surely as it did on the Egyptians. The question was not whether Israel could stand in the presence of Pharaoh, but whether Israel could stand in the presence of God.

Verse 28. God told them (see Ex. 12) to take of the blood of the paschal lamb, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses wherein they dwell. "For," said He, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast... and the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."

The destroying angel passed through the land. In the darkness and dead of night he did his work. He knew no difference between the houses of the Israelites and those of the Egyptians, unless marked with the blood. Over such a house he passed. He saw the blood on the lintel and on the doorposts; he looked no further; he entered not into the house.

All God's dealings with sinners must be upon the ground of His holy judgment of sin. But then, in the case of salvation, He awakens the soul to the sense of this. He says, Judgment is coming in, and there is the consequence of it; and then He puts upon the lintel and the doorposts the blood. Before God sets us out on the journey, He makes it evident that He has settled the question of sin; that the demands of His justice have been perfectly met. God will not go on with us until the question between Himself and us is settled. He may deal with us in grace, but He does not set out with us on the journey until He has done that. Before Israel began their journey God had passed through the land and over them in judgment. They had feasted in the happiest confidence under the protection of the blood of the lamb.

Before we go to take the walk of faith, the question of God's judgment of sin must be a settled question. All that which is, properly speaking, Christian life, the path of experience, the life of faith, is based on God's having passed over us. He cannot pass over sin. What He does—working faith in us by His Spirit—is, He shows us the blood. Having awakened us to the consciousness of sin, before we are even beginning the journey of faith, He teaches us that He has settled the question about it once and forever. "Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more." Then He becomes a God for us by the way. Faith sees and apprehends—not that there is no sin, no judgment, but—that, by God's own work and word, the question between itself and God is a settled question. Blood has been put between the soul and God—the blood of God's own Son. Never was there such a judgment of sin. I may see myself to be the vilest of sinners, but I see that which has perfectly met the demands of God's justice. "The blood shall be to you for a token."

But then the soul has been accustomed to be a slave.

After the children of Israel had seen the blood upon the doorposts we find them trembling before the power of Pharaoh. They were on the road, but they were not out of Egypt; they were still in Pharaoh's territory. They had the knowledge of deliverance from the judgment of God that had fallen upon the firstborn; of the blood of the lamb as having met and sheltered them from that; yet they were still in conflict with Pharaoh. At the appointed time they set out on their journey. Leaving the world, they forsake Egypt, the place where they had been slaves, and Pharaoh, the prince of the world, pursues after them. Then comes dread and dismay. Till we know that the death of Christ has emancipated us from the country of Satan, we never know full rest of soul. Satan can make some claim on us, till we can tell him that we are dead and risen with Christ. Because they had been slaves to the power of Pharaoh, and because they dreaded Pharaoh (and there is no wonder), they had not the faith that says, "if God be for us," &c. Pharaoh was stronger than Israel,

but God was stronger than Pharaoh; when they lifted up their eyes and beheld the Egyptians marching after them, they were sore afraid. And they said unto Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." They were here in a worse condition, as to their feelings, than ever before.

And it is so often with saints. We have need of the power of God with us and for us, and to know it too (as well as that, when the judgment of God was against us, the blood satisfied His judgment), in order for fullness of peace. I may have seen the virtue of Christ's blood to save from judgment; but it is quite a different thing to have a constant, settled certainty that God is FOR me.

The first thing, when God has awakened the soul to a sense of sin in His sight, is the question of how it may be secured against His righteous judgment. Then it sees the blood on the doorposts, and gets peace. Therefore, if I lose sight of the blood, God is still, to my soul's apprehension, a Judge. Now that is not at all the proper place for a believer to be in. There is the justice of God, and "without shedding of blood is no remission." If I can say that the blood that has been shed has satisfied that justice, I can see that God is no longer a Judge—His justice has been satisfied. But if, on the other hand, His justice has to be satisfied, God is still a Judge.

The Israelites got so terrified, distressed, and dismayed, so under the power of evil which was against them, that they got into the practical question, in conflict, whether God was to have them or Satan. And so constantly with saints. We have been such slaves to the power of Satan, that we have not a consciousness of redemption to God. There was Pharaoh (Satan to us), the power of evil, pursuing them, and driving them up to this point, till death and judgment (of which the Red Sea is the symbol), stared them in the face. The question must be settled, if they could get through death and judgment. They could not get out of the difficulty by their own strength. The Red Sea was before them; they could not get through it; Pharaoh and all his host behind them; and there was no escaping by another road. They were quite shut in, and brought to the sense that there must be a deliverer, or it was all over with them. All this was exceedingly alarming in itself; but it was God's way of delivering. "And Moses said, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever;" you can neither go backward nor forward; you must stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord— "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

The Lord steps in, and puts Himself between Satan and His people. "The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night." Before He gives the comfort of deliverance, He always takes care that Satan shall not touch us.

What comes to Israel then?

Verse 29. The very thing that seemed to be their destruction becomes their salvation. "And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind

all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left." It was no battle for Israel against Pharaoh. "And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians. And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore."

Death is the wages of sin, there is no escape; the Red Sea must be passed. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the judgment." There is not one into whose hands this may fall, looking at it as our natural portion (I am not now speaking of Christ taking it for us, as He has for all those who believe, as it goes on to say, "So Christ was once offered,"), but must come there. It is the natural consequence of sin. No matter whether Egyptians, or Israelites, death and judgment overtake all. The Red Sea must be passed. But, if met in grace, as it was by Israel, we shall see that this very thing is our full and unmingled deliverance. There poor Israel stood and looked at the eternal overthrow of their enemies. When the Egyptians were lying dead on the seashore they were safe, singing the song of redemption. True, the Wilderness had to be passed, Amalek conflicted with, and the like; but they were out of Egypt. They were singing the song of deliverance in simple-hearted confidence; Egypt left, and left forever; the power of Pharaoh broken; not an Egyptian to be seen.

And now the "assaying" to pass the Red Sea, is that, alas! which many are doing at the present hour (in a better spirit, indeed, than these Egyptians, yet with, to themselves, an equally terrible result). I am not now speaking of the avowed enemies of God, though we are all by nature enemies of God; neither of those who are pursuing after the people of God; but of those who are "assaying" to pass through death and judgment in their own way. Just because they are in a Christian country, and amongst Christians, they hope, with the name of Christ, to get to heaven in company with the people of God. But all must pass through that which is in God's road there. If we have got up to the Red Sea, death and judgment must be passed, and where shall we be with all our Egyptian wisdom and learning, with all our chariots and horsemen, before death and judgment! Death and judgment must be passed through. If we are "assaying to do this without God for us, if the question of death and judgment be not already and altogether settled (as it was for Israel, when by faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land), it must be our destruction." People confess they have to die, and that after death there is a judgment, and that they must stand in that judgment; but, if they are "assaying" to do this in their own strength, it must be then

infallible, positive destruction.

We must all, converted or unconverted, give up the world. The veriest votary of the world must sooner or later give up its vanities and its pleasures, its hopes and its interests; he must give them up. The only difference is this, that the Christian gives them up for God; the worldling gives them up because he cannot keep them. The king of Egypt gave up Egypt and Egypt's court, as well as Moses; but there was this difference, the king of Egypt gave it up for judgment, Moses gave it up for Christ.

The very, hopes people have will be their ruin. They see God's Israel going to Canaan, and they hope to get there too. But they are going to heaven in their own way, and they are going to heaven in their own strength. What does the psalmist say? give thy servant a favorable judgment? No! "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." They are hoping that it will be all well with them in the judgment; they take the name of Christ upon their lips, and think to get as safely to heaven as real believers. But they must pass through that which brings out into full light, clearly and evidently, what they really are; they must pass the barrier God has set in the way; they must go through death and judgment; and there will be "no man living justified."

God's rod of power was stretched out when Israel were passing through, and there was no sea, except as a wall on their right hand and on their left, shutting out Pharaoh. Where do we find the ground of the confidence of faith? It is altogether of a different sort to that of the mere professor. "That sea," says the believer, "I dare not go through it; I dare not put a foot in it, except at the bidding of God, and then there is no sea." Because people call themselves Christians, the mischief is, they expect to get through as well as the real people of God. Because the way has been opened to faith, so that faith can tread it, and walk through as on dry ground, they think they can go too. The path is opened to faith, and there is not a drop of water there—death is gone, and judgment is gone, all is over—it is dry ground, and God has made it so; but it is the people of faith alone who can tread it. That which is dry ground to Israel is sea to all besides. Let the Egyptians attempt to follow, and things take their natural course, death and judgment are there, and there shall be no man living justified. The believer has no such thought as that of going to stand in the judgment. When God steps in between him and Pharaoh, what does he see The "salvation of the Lord." The very thing he dreaded becomes his security. Christ is there in the deep; he sees the judgment of God in all its weight and in all its power borne by Christ. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over Me." The waves and billows of the Red Sea have gone over Christ. There I have seen death and judgment. I have seen the Son of God, crying, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" I have seen Him made sin, bearing the judgment due to sinners Yes, I have seen all the weight and terror of those waves, but they have passed over Christ. It is the thing that saves me, is death. It is the thing that saves me, is judgment. Grace has found its way into death, and it is all "dry land." God takes me there, and says, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

I see this great and full salvation in a risen Christ; and what I get is, that death is mine; "all things," says the apostle, "are ours;" yes, death is "ours." Satan has meddled with death and judgment, and his power in death is completely broken. Like Pharaoh, he has been overcome in the last stronghold in which he held us captive. "Through death," Christ "has destroyed him that had the

power of death.” Have the waves of the Red Sea, the billows of the wrath of God, gone over Christ? He has abolished all that was against us. Satan has come, and meddled; and what has he done? He has put Christ to death; but the triumph of the prince of darkness was but the display of his defeat. He has come and grappled with Christ, put forth all his strength against Him, struck Him with the whole sting and power he had in death; but Christ has risen out of it on the other side, beyond his reach; and now, morally, death has no power for the believer.

As the captain of salvation, Christ had come down, and put Himself in the place of those over whom Satan had the power of death, by the judgment of God. If He had taken their cause in hand, He must be treated according to their circumstances. He stood there, and felt all the weight and horror of the place. Knowing the terrors of the wrath of God, the bitterness of the cup He had to drink, He prayed that, if it were possible, the cup might pass from Him. But love had brought Him there; “by the grace of God” He tasted death. God has settled the question. All the account against me, the ground of Satan’s accusations, appealing to the righteous judgment of God, is gone. God’s wrath has all passed over. The moment we come up on the other side of the Red Sea, it is all done; we have only our song to sing— “The Lord has triumphed gloriously.” The Egyptians whom we have seen today, we shall see them again no more forever.

Israel could sing this song before they took one step in the wilderness; they could say, “Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation. The people shall hear and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which Thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, Thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign forever and ever.”

There was all possible difference marked now between poor Israel, who had God for them, and the Egyptians, who (with a great deal more human possibility of getting through) were driving on in the carelessness and folly of their own power, to be met, and brought to a standstill, by the power of death and judgment—just like poor unconverted people, who, because they see Christians going to heaven, are “assaying” to go also, but without the knowledge of the blood (that which can alone settle the question of death and judgment, so that they should have God for them, to step in between themselves and Pharaoh), as having been sprinkled on the houses in Egypt. To all such the very place of salvation will be the place of ruin.

Israel never sang this song when it was merely a question of blood on the doorposts. They did not sing it till they had taken some days’ journey from the place of their bondage, and had been shut up between the Red Sea and Pharaoh. They were on the road; they had journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, and from Succoth to Etham, and they were encamped before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the Red Sea. They had left Egypt and had brought over all the malice of Satan against them. But the power of God was WITH them, and for them, and it was simply, “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” The controversy was between God and Pharaoh (not between Israel and Pharaoh), and it was soon settled. God would have us broken down to this. They had seen

the blood upon the doorposts—there was not any question of sin between themselves and God; weak, feeble, and failing, they might be, but God saw the blood—they had set out in good earnest from Egypt, with their kneading-troughs bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. Now they sing of accomplished redemption. They had the desert to tread where there was no way, nor food, nor water; the manna had to be gathered day by day, and if the sun was up it was all gone (spiritual diligence is needed, “the diligent soul shall be made fat”); but they were redeemed, and they had God WITH them, and God FOR them, to lead and to guide them in the way.

Well, beloved, have our souls seen this redemption? Have we been brought yet to the Red Sea, and to feel that we could not tread the path opened to faith, in our own strength; that if we attempted to do it we should be drowned? And have we found that it is no sea, but dry ground, that there is not a drop of water left there? If we have known the blood of Christ as our only hope before God, looking at Him as a Judge; if we have known that we must leave Egypt and tread the wilderness on our way to the promised rest, we may still be in measure unable to say, ‘Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed.’ That does not mean that we are not on the road, but that we do not know, properly speaking, God to be for us. We may, as sinners, have looked simply to the blood; but if we have not fully understood the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as emancipating us from the country and power of Satan, we have not stood still to see the salvation of the Lord. The waves and the billows of God’s wrath have gone over the head of Christ, and He has made it to be no sea. He has come down into the very place of wrath on account of sin; and He has risen out of it, and all is over. The thunderbolt has lit on the head of Christ, and the storm is over for faith. Nothing gives such a sense of the horribleness of sin, nothing is such a testimony to the judgment of God against sin, as seeing Christ under it; and yet nothing is such a testimony to the love of God towards the poor sinner.

God's Comforts the Stay of the Soul

Psalms 90-100 are connected together, and seem to me to describe the dealings of the Lord with the Jews in the latter day on the earth. But I am not going to speak of that now. We may often derive comfort from principles which we find in such portions of the Scripture—revealing to us, as they do, God's character and other qualities; but it is important to know the mind of the Spirit in the primary sense, as we shall then be able to discern what God is teaching us through them with a great deal more clearness and certainty.

The two principles which form the basis of what is dwelt on here are, that the workers of iniquity are allowed to lift up their heads and flourish, but that the Lord is, and will be, Most High for evermore.

There is the clear perception of this throughout. Under the temporary exaltation and prevalence of wickedness the godly are in a very tried state; the righteous suffer, but vengeance belongs to God (not to the sufferer), therefore the cry, verses 1, 2.

To such a height are the workers of iniquity allowed to go, that, in the consciousness that the LORD'S throne could not be cast down, the question comes in, "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" (vs. 20). So completely has wickedness got place in the earth that there is a sort of question raised—whether the throne of iniquity could subsist in companionship in judgment with the divine throne? The answer is, Judgment is coming, "The LORD our God shall cut them off." (vs. 23) Judgment shall return to righteousness, in the place of trial and suffering.

The point on which I would dwell a little at present is the consolation of the saints during this time of trial—God's "comforts."

In the first place we have the assurance, "The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." (vs. 11)

Then, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD," (vss. 12, 13).

As to the pride and purpose of man, it is settled in a word. The "thoughts of man" are not only inferior to God's wisdom, they are "vanity." That settles the whole question. All that begins and ends in the heart of man is "vanity," and nothing else. Whatever the state of things around, though there may be a "multitude of thoughts within," as "what will all this come to?" "how will that end?" and the like—every barrier we can raise, all our strength, all our weakness, whatever the wave after wave that may flow over us—the LORD'S thought about it all is, that it is "vanity." All is working together to one object—God's plan, that upon which His heart is set—the glorification of Jesus, and ours, with Him. Every thought and every plan of man must therefore be "vanity," because it has not this, God's object, for its object; and God's object always comes to pass. There cannot be two ends to what is going on. Let men break their hearts, about it, all simply comes to nothing, the end of it is "vanity." God's object is, that "all men should honor the Son, even as they

honor the Father.”

Take a man of the world—the shrewdest calculator, the ablest politician, or the greatest statesman—a poor bed-ridden saint is wiser than he, and more sure of having his plans brought about; for the heart of the simplest, feeblest saint runs in the same channel with God’s, and, though the saint has no strength, God has.

In this psalm we find first the tumult of the enemies, then that God has done it. So with the saint constantly in trial: he sees the work of Satan, then God’s hand in it, and he gets blessing. All the present effect of these dealings of “the wicked” is, “Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law; that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.” The pit is not yet digged; the throne of iniquity is not yet put down.

If in chastening the power of the adversary is against us, the Lord’s end in it all is to give “rest in the day of adversity.”

I speak not merely of suffering for Christ—if we are reproached for the name of Christ, it is only for joy, and triumph, and glory to us—but of those things in which there may be the “multitude of thoughts within,” because we see that we have been walking inconsistently and carelessly in the LORD’S ways. Still it is, “Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord...” The Lord does not chasten willingly, without a needs-be for it. And when there has been failure or inconsistency that brings chastisements, He turns the occasion of the chastisement to the working out of the heart’s evil that needed to be chastened. The Lord in chastening throws back the heart upon the springs which have been the occasion of the evil. The soul is hereby laid bare for the application of God’s truth unto it, that the word may come home with power. It is taught wherefore it has been chastened; and not only so, but it is brought into the secret of God’s heart—it learns more of His character, who “will not cast off His people, neither forsake His inheritance.” (vs. 14) What God desires for us is not only that we should have privileges conferred upon us, but that we should have fellowship with Himself. Through these chastenings the whole framework of the heart is brought into juxtaposition with God. And this stablishes and settles it on the certainty of the hope that grace affords.

Look at Peter after the enemy had sifted him, though his fall was most humbling and bitter, yet by it he gained a deeper knowledge of God and a deeper acquaintance with himself, so that he could apply all that he had learned to his brethren.

The Lord gives our souls “rest from the day of adversity” by communion with Himself, not only communion in joy, but in holiness. We are thus brought into the secret of God. Circumstances are only used to break down the door, and let in God. God is near to the soul, when He in the certainty of love comes within the circumstances, and is known as better than any circumstance.

The LORD never chastens without occasion for it, and yet “blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O LORD.” There is not a more wonderful word than that! I do not say that a man can say this always while under chastening; for if the soul is judging itself, there will be often anxiety and sorrow; but the effects are blessed. What we want is that all our thoughts and ways and actings of will should be displaced, and that God should be everything. All chastening must have in principle the character of law in it; for it is the Lord dealing with His people in righteousness (as it is

said, "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work,"), not in the sovereign riches of divine grace. It is God's allowing nothing in the heart inconsistent with that holiness of which the believer has been made partaker. It is indeed most blessed grace that takes all the pains with us; but that is not the character it assumes.

What we exceedingly need is intimacy of soul with God, resting in quietness in Him, though all be confusion and tumult around us. When the man here had God near his heart, though iniquity abounded, it was only the means of making God's "comforts" known to his soul, as it is said, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul." (vs. 19) Our portion is not only to know the riches of God's grace, but the secret of the Lord, to have intimacy of communion with Him in His holiness. Then, however adverse the circumstances, the soul rests quietly and steadfastly in Him.

If, my friends, you would have full unhindered peace and depth of fellowship with God and one with another; if you would meet circumstances and temptations without being moved thereby, it must flow from this, not merely the knowledge that all things are yours in Christ, but acquaintance with God Himself, as it is said, "being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

May we, through grace enabling, let God have all His way in our hearts.

The Cross

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”—Galatians 6:14.

I would say a few words on the entire end of self in THE CROSS—the nothingness to which it reduces us. How little do we know practically of this. Let us look at Jesus, and then learn how very little our souls have realized its power in thus setting ourselves aside.

We see in Him one who had all human righteousness, and one too in whom “dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;” yet what path did He take? What was THE CROSS to Him? To what did it reduce Him? The entire setting aside of all this human righteousness, of all this divine power. The perfect strength of His love was proved, not only in that He “did not please Himself”—though “in the form of God,” and thinking it “not robbery to be equal with God,” that He emptied Himself, and “being found in fashion as a man,” humbled Himself to take the place of our disobedience—but that in this place of love He was content to be utterly rejected! to be reduced to nothing, that love might shine out!

The flesh in us is subtle, very subtle: if we show love, we expect that it will be felt; but if otherwise—if, when we have rendered a kindness, we get no return, not even a kind word—our hearts grow faint and cold in the exercise of love. Do we know what it is when our hearts have gone forth in love to meet with that which we read of in Corinthians, “Though the more I love you, the less I be loved;” to find that the only consequence of humiliation is to become thereby less respected, more humbled still. Thus it was with Jesus; full of patience and tenderness, He exposed Himself to the power and malice of Satan. But what did He find in us when doing this work of love? Man took occasion, by His very lowliness, to treat Him with the utmost scorn. He was “the reproach of men, the despised of the people.” They kept Him in on every side: “Dogs have compassed me about: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.” “Many bulls have compassed me about: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round: They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.” He looked for comforters, but found none. One of those with whom He had “taken sweet counsel” lifted up his heel against Him; and even that, disciple who had been most forward to declare his adhesion, “Though all men should forsake Thee, yet will not I,” denied Him with oaths and curses.

There was no outlet to His grief, no comfort from man; and here we see the meaning of that, “Be not Thou far from Me, O My God!” Cast out by the scorn of those whom He came to in love, pressed upon, closed in by those whom He came to save, His soul turned to God: “My God, be Thou not far from Me!” But God had hid His face from Him; “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” He now found the darkness and wrath that came upon Him to the uttermost; there was no response on any side: the deep hatred of man around, and from above darkness also; everything was set aside but the power of love. “I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I come into deep waters, where the floods overflow Me.” The waves and the billows went over Him; all was lost in the waves but love: it was that which sustained Him; love was greater than all; and it

was set on us.

When we see what He, as emptied, was, we come to the depth of love. If He emptied Himself of everything else, there was still the fullness of love, for He is God, and “God is love.” We, dear brethren, have found the fullness of love in Jesus, and that shall be our everlasting portion—we shall know, shall taste this love forever.

When Jesus was “going about” here, it was as “doing good;” He could not restrain His power, though ever so lowly and humbled, when good was to be done; He was obliged to show it. Thus in the life of Jesus, in His actings here, there was something which the natural heart must own, must approve: we like to have our diseases cured; and when they saw the dead raised, they could rejoice in having their deceased friends brought to life again: but in THE CROSS there was no putting forth of this power, there was no miracle—nothing but weakness and degradation—He was “crucified through weakness.” Trial from man, temptation from Satan, desertion from God—there was nothing to be seen but love—the depth, the fullness, the riches of that love which will be our happy, blessed portion forever.

The natural heart in every one of us hates the power of THE CROSS. We want something for the eye to rest upon, we seek a little honor here; THE CROSS stains all the pride of human glory, and therefore we like it not. Let us test ourselves, beloved. Are we really content to take THE CROSS in this its power, and to say, “I want nothing else”? “God forbid that I should glory, save in, THE CROSS of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world! May our souls rest in this blessed confidence—Jesus is our everlasting portion; to dwell in Him is to dwell in God, and “God is love.” Many Christians are cherishing those things which keep them from knowing the full power of this love in their hearts. We cannot enjoy love and pride together. Whatever nourishes self, no matter what—honor, talents, learning, wealth, friends, respectability—anything, everything which the natural man delights in, nourishes pride in us, renders Christ less precious, and the enjoyment of His love less full.

The Lord give us to know what it is to be “crucified to the world.” Let us, beloved brethren, bless God for everything that puts down self.

A Full Christ for Empty Sinners: Part 2

Evidently, for the blood to be apart from the flesh, so as to speak of eating the one and drinking the other, the blood must have been shed in death. So that we have here, in the fullest way, the death of Christ, the shedding of His blood, set forth; and, at the same time, the most solemn testimony of its absolute necessity for each individual, and of the equally absolute necessity for its individual reception. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Who besides could have provided for our perishing souls? What other life would have had in it the atoning value, the saving efficacy, at once to meet the highest claim of God's moral glory, the glory of all His perfections, and reach down to the lowest depths of our need as guilty, ruined, hopelessly undone sinners? And yet it is as Son of Man that He here speaks of Himself. How could He have suffered death, had He not become the Son of Man? How this links together the mysteries of Bethlehem and Calvary; the incarnation and the cross. The one was in order to the other. He came to die. "Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." It was "for the suffering of death" that He was "made a little lower than the angels." And it is by His death we live. Though He had life in Himself, and though, anticipatively of His atoning work, He gave life at any time to any poor sinner, it was only on the ground of that work that life could flow from His person to any who heard His voice and believed His words while here; and the actual shedding of His blood as that of the great and all-atoning victim for our sins was the only way in which the floodgates of mercy could be thrown open to guilty, justly-condemned sinners. How widely they are flung open now! How completely has Christ's precious sacrifice removed all the obstacles to our salvation presented by the character of God, His holy nature, the majesty of His throne, and the faithfulness of His word. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness;" and while this perfection might surely have been displayed in the endless punishment of the whole guilty race, how then would the love of God have been exercised or shown? Where is that love so manifested as at the cross? And where besides is God seen as so inexorably just? The flames of hell are not so glorious a vindication of His righteous claims, as the agonies of His spotless, immaculate Son. God's holy hatred of sin could not go further than the averting His countenance from the Son of His love, while drinking the cup for us. Who will not tremble before this holy Lord God, who, sooner than tarnish His throne, or break the word which had gone out of His mouth, that sin should have death for its righteous punishment, gave up to death—the death of the cross—the One who had been in His bosom from all eternity? And then to think of that One voluntarily yielding up His life! In obedience to His Father, and in love to us, He drinks the cup of wrath, that in Him, the slain One, we perishing sinners may find all we need. Life flows to us through His death; and the soul that finds its hunger appeased and its thirst quenched by what Scripture tells of Christ on the cross, has not only life in Him, eternal life, issuing in the resurrection of life at the last day, but a present fullness of nutriment and refreshing, of which the Savior witnesses in these words, "For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." Continuing to feed on Him as the slain as well as the incarnate Christ, we abide in Him, and He in us. "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in Him." This language

assumes, though it does not mention, the fact that He who used it would rise again. And with Christ as risen, they who feed on Him as slain, are so identified, that He here, for the first time in Scripture, speaks of our dwelling in Him, and He in us. Dwelling in Him, we participate in all that is His; and by His dwelling in us, we become vessels for the manifestation of what He is. Nor is this the whole. Christ's own life as the Son of Man was a life of entire dependence on the Father; and ours is one of dependence on Christ Himself. But the one is presented as the model for the other. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." Blessed Jesus! teach us thus to live in hourly dependence on Thyself! It is at this point that the Savior sums up the whole subject of which He had been treating, "This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead; he that eateth of this bread shall live forever."

The native sphere and home of this undying life is not earth, but heaven. To all intents it is an exotic here. Perfectly was it manifested in the three-and-thirty years' sojourn on earth of the Son of Man; and, as we have seen, this display of divine life in man in the person of Christ is one great leading subject of this gospel. But the One in whom this display took place was a stranger here. The book witnesses this fact throughout. We have not far to read before we find the words— "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." And then more plainly still— "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." Even His own people, the Israel of Jehovah's choice, had, as we have also so largely seen in this very chapter, no heart for Jesus: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Thus rejected by those among whom He came, He makes no secret of whence He had come. To Nicodemus He says— "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" Who so competent to tell as He to whom these things were familiar, and the mystery of whose person still made heaven His home, though as man He had come to sojourn below? "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." Such were His own words to the Jewish rabbi; while in the same chapter the Holy Ghost, by the evangelist's pen, delightedly bears witness to Him as the heavenly Stranger here: "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth." Alas, that He has to add: "And no man receiveth His testimony!" Our own chapter bears abundant witness to His having come down from heaven. This was what so provoked the opposition of the Jews—an opposition which became so open and so fully declared as to force from the Savior's lips the most solemn statements as to the contrast between their origin and the sphere whence He had come: "And He said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world." (Chapter 8) No; He was from heaven. A true, real man; veritably partaker with the children, blessed be God! of flesh and blood-partaker, as He has been telling us, of a life which He would give in the shedding of His blood, that there might be the link between Him and all who receive Him of an undying life. But all this could not constitute Him a native of this world, a denizen of the earth; He was a stranger here. And when many of His disciples began to say inwardly to themselves, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" He, knowing their thoughts, replied, "Doth this offend you? What, and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" Thus does He give, somewhat obscurely indeed, as suggesting much more than was spoken, the first intimation of the third great fact of which our chapter is the witness. Christ incarnate, and thus come down from heaven; Christ slain, His blood shed for sinful

men, becoming the suited food of a life, the first movement of which in us is in the sense of our need as sinners which can only thus be appeased; and now Christ ascended, involving of necessity His resurrection, but including much more than this. The eternal life which was with the Father before all worlds—the eternal, untreated, all-creating Word, which “in the beginning” was “with God” and “was God,” had come down and become, in that act of deep humiliation, “the Son of Man.” He was now returning to that sphere of unmingled blessedness, of highest glory, whence He had come forth to Bethlehem’s manger and Calvary’s cross; but He was returning thither as Son of Man. Thenceforth He should be seated as man on the throne of His Father. Heaven, not earth, becomes thus from the moment of His session there the home of all who by eating His flesh and drinking His blood become partakers of His life. Earth becomes a wilderness, a place of exile, to all such, just as it was to Him while here. He is our life; and this associates us necessarily with heaven and all that is native to that abode of purity and joy. As another once remarked: “If sin has opened to man the place of woe never designed for him, but for the devil and his angels, grace has opened to him that heaven which is peculiarly and distinctively the dwelling-place of God.” “The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s; but the earth hath He given to the children of men.” So the psalmist wrote; and such indeed was the only inheritance which could have descended to us, even from unfallen Adam. The earth was given to him (Gen. 1); but when his sin had opened hell to the finally impenitent and unbelieving, grace opened heaven to all who become willing to enter there in the value of Christ’s blessed person and atoning work. What He but obscurely hints to His disciples in our chapter has since become accomplished fact, and one of the great foundation-facts of Christianity. Christ has gone up on high. The Son of Man has ascended up where He was before. His request to His Father (John 17) has been fulfilled: “And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” Nor would He be there alone: “Father, I will (or desire) 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.” Heaven is now the revealed home and sphere of that eternal life which, if absolutely and perfectly displayed on earth in the One of whom we read, “In Him was life,” is also derivatively enjoyed by all who believe. “What, and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?”

It was for other lips and another pen than the beloved disciple’s to unfold this subject in detail. The place in heaven, in and with Christ, bestowed on believers by the grace which reigns through righteousness by our Lord Jesus Christ, is the Apostle Paul’s distinctive theme. The manifestation of divine life on earth, perfectly in Christ, and really though derivatively in us, is the theme of John’s gospel and epistle. It is, of all themes, the most vital, essential, fundamental. But deeply interesting it is to find such links as our Lord’s words last quoted, and those from John 17:24, evincing that whether Paul, or Peter, or John, be the instrument of communication, it is one vast circle of truth which is revealed, of which the center and fullness are found in the person and sacrifice and exaltation of the Son of God and Son of Man—Christ incarnate, Christ slain, Christ ascended, a full Christ for empty sinners.

Many who had for a season followed Christ drew back from the time when this discourse was delivered. This did not surprise Him; but it afforded Him the occasion of challenging the hearts of those who still surrounded Him. To them Jesus said, “Will ye also go away?” No one wonders that Peter was spokesman for them all; and he might not yet have measured himself, as afterward,

through grace, he did, when he went out and wept bitterly. Nevertheless there is a warmth, an energy, a decision, about his words, that we may well covet, and as to which we may challenge our hearts, dear Christian reader, whether we could reply thus. Go away! "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." May our hearts repel thus, and disown every thought of any other than this blessed Christ of God. "To whom shall we go?" To whom indeed? Oh to abide in Him! May we have grace to cleave to Him with purpose of heart, and may He be glorified in each of us for His Name's sake.

FATHER! we, Thy children, bless Thee,

For Thy love on us bestowed;

As our Father we address Thee,

Called to be the sons of God.

Wondrous was Thy love in giving

Jesus for our sins to die!

Wondrous was His grace in leaving,

For our sakes, the heavens on high!

Now the sprinkled blood has freed us,

On we go toward our rest,

Through the desert Thou dost lead us,

With Thy constant favor blest:

By Thy truth and Spirit guiding,

Earnest He of what's to come,

And with daily food providing,

Thou dost lead Thy children home.

Though our pilgrimage be dreary,

This is not our resting-place;

Shall we of the way be weary,

When we see our Master's face?

No; e'en now anticipating,

In this hope our souls rejoice,

And His promised advent waiting,

Soon shall hear His welcome voice.

(Continued from page 160)

God's Love, Gratuitous and Motive: A Word on Why Do I This?

"If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." Song of Solomon 8:7.

The pride of man's foolish heart is ever carrying him away from the grace sent to him in Jesus, which must meet him as a beggar, helpless, and undone, to some requirement that he may satisfy, which will, as he thinks, enable him to meet God on better terms; or he does away with the richness of the grace, and makes it inefficient to meet his real necessities, and then strives to make up the inefficiency by his own change of conduct. On the other hand, the soul taught of God is taught its entire helplessness (not merely to avow it with the lips, but to know it in the experienced weakness and wickedness of the heart); but it is taught also to turn away from this to the brightness of grace, that has reached it in its wickedness, and met it in the truth of its condition, evil as it was, with the full consolation, the desperate necessity of that condition sought—Jesus made unto it, of God, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

That man is ever attempting to make God as ungenerous as himself; to limit the greatness of His gifts by his own unbelief, and thus to dim the glory of His abounding grace, is not only the necessary result, but the proof, of the unchangeable evil of his heart. It is this, simply this, which has driven the church into the world, lowering the standard of obedience to the habits of its new associates. Vain would be the search of that man who might try in the pride of his heart to bring evidence from the word of truth that any one other motive but love was reckoned on, there to bring back to God, and guide in His ways, the heart of a self-willed and wayward sinner.

There can be no union with God in thought or act, save in love: "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John 4:7,8) A service of constraint is no service to God. Anything that would impede the flow of the living waters, the fresh streams of love, peace, and joy, into the weary heart of a God-fearing sinner, is just that which would hinder fruitfulness, and leave it a sterile and thorn-bearing thing still.

Now the scriptural word sanctification is a fair title assumed by error, and one so apparently authoritative in its claim, that many are led captive by it who, while they feel and know their slavery, are unable to account for it. "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed," is the happy assurance of our Lord; and anything that would limit the love He came to prove, is but keeping fast the fetters that bind to earth, and holding us back from the happy, and therefore free, obedience of children. What is "sanctification," as now used, but uniting that which God has so graciously, so carefully separated—salvation and its holy consequences?

If there is one statement of truth more clear than another in Scripture, and more uncompromising in the language in which it is put, it is this, that redemption is exclusively the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, not that of the Holy Ghost. That faith is the work of the Holy Spirit, is another question. As a Savior, and a perfect Savior, putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, Jesus says, "Look unto ME, and be ye saved." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of

Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:14,15) If what is so extensively termed sanctification (that is, progressive advancement in holiness), is necessary to salvation, it might well be asked, How much would do? He who knows God will know also that he must be as perfect as He is perfect, or neither God or himself could be satisfied. But not only is this robbing the cross of Jesus of its power, and making His blood inefficient, but, as its result (how completely in this, as in everything, is wisdom justified of her children), we have nothing but an unhappy and unfruitful church, hardly knowing whether it is saved or not, knowing enough of itself to understand that it comes short of God’s glory; and therefore, to get itself into peace (as looking to “sanctification,” and not to Christ), it must reduce the standard of obedience, bringing down God’s, character that it may somehow come up to it, and so be satisfied with itself. Thus the ingenuity of unbelief will torture the simplicity of God’s Word into something that will impose a burden, when God’s love has sought to remove it; and those who are thus self-tasked, or taught by another gospel than that of full and unconditional love, have to run in fetters, with the brightness of the prize for which they contend obscured by intervening clouds of fear and doubt as to God’s willingness to bestow it on them. But thus saith, the Lord: “Whosoever believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” (John 3:36) The whole Word, in its testimony to the Lord Jesus, speaks of Him as manifesting God as a Savior; and it is in the faith of this that the troubled spirit gets peace, not to be found elsewhere. It sees the God it feared becoming, in His love to the sinner, the sinner’s Savior, and therefore it has confidence towards God; for who can doubt, if God becomes a Savior, the perfectness of the salvation? Its completeness is the soul’s security; and faith in it, as perfect and complete, gives peace, and instant peace too. It was thus the gospel (which is “glad tidings,” the expression of God’s love to sinners as sinners) was received when it was first believed on in the world. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” was the Spirit’s reply to the trembling jailor, and he rejoiced in God. (Acts 16) “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest,” was the prompt answer to the Ethiopian: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” was the happy expression of his saving faith; “and he went on his way rejoicing.” (Acts 8:37,39)

That salvation, then, is utterly irrespective of what we have been, or of what we are, or of the measure of sanctity we may attain, is and must be the conclusion of the heart that trembles at God’s Word. The simple fact that “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” is the proof that nothing but unbelief can hinder any sinner’s participation in all the rich blessings God has to bestow. What is sin but estrangement of heart from and disobedience to the authority of Him who proved, by the gift of His Son to those who were so estranged and in open rebellion against Him, that, though sin was reigning unto death, His grace could reign triumphantly above all sin?

In the death of the Lord Jesus Christ we learn what God is to sinners as sinners. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission” of sin. (Heb. 9:22) Death is the wages of sin: death was the portion of Jesus, therefore, as made sin for us.

It is the blood of Jesus alone that cleanseth from all sin. (1 John 1:7) It is by the blood of Jesus alone we have boldness of access into the holiest. (Heb. 10:19) It is by the blood of Jesus alone, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot unto God, that our consciences are purged from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb. 9)

Here then is our secure, our only resting-place—the blood of the Holy Lamb. If the Spirit beareth witness to the sinner, it is to show the cross as his salvation; to the saved sinner, indeed, He reveals glory, far deeper glory, in the face of the Crucified One, as well as the glory of the inheritance (John 16); but, in imparting peace to the conscience, in delivering from the dread of death and of God's anger, the testimony is one and unvaried—Jesus delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. He who believes this is saved. Let him become ever so exalted in the evident favor of God, to that must he recur for his peace and salvation—“Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Nor is this merely a pardon given in dependence on future obedience. Alas, to those who know how their service is hindered by the heavy bondage of a sinful body, how the flesh ever “lusteth against the Spirit,” who know that all their obedience, while so hindered, is in God's estimate “unprofitableness” (surely unprofitableness can be no claim to heaven), Where would be the joy? Oh, how would man pervert God's liberal and most wondrous grace! How does he ever try to escape from the full blessing of being saved altogether by grace, in his ignorance of that God who, having not spared His Son, but delivered Him up for us all, will with Him freely give us all things! (Rom. 8:32) What saith the Lord? “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” (Rom. 8:1). One with Him who hath died unto sin once, and over whom death hath no more dominion; the believer is called on to reckon himself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God; as knowing that his old man is crucified with Him; baptized into His death, and raised with Him again into newness of life; dead, and therefore freed from sin. (Rom. 6:1-7) It is in the knowledge of the true position of freedom into which he is put before God, as one with Jesus, where He is at the right hand of God, that he is enabled to overcome sin in his daily and hourly conflict. Faith in the perfect victory of Jesus over all that was man's enemy, is the alone power by which we can become victors too.

It is the freedom of the happy spirit, abiding in a Father's love, which alone can give power to serve Him who is love; and upon this rests all the instruction of our Lord, delivering, by the power of that name “Father,” from every bondage, freeing from every other master—man, the world, the flesh, the devil, and all the anxious cares of our fearful and doubting hearts—into the buoyancy, and therefore energy, of spirit by which alone we can serve in newness of life, being careful for nothing, taking no thought for the morrow, with the eye single in its object, the heart single in its subjection and service, having no master but Christ, no object but His glory; having present fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, led by the Spirit of God (“where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty”), abiding in Christ, and having, as so abiding, His peace and His joy. (John 16:27)

Jesus came to declare the Father; He spake not of Himself, He was the Father's servant. The Holy Ghost is the servant of the risen Jesus, and speaks only of Him, not of Himself. Whether it be the first entering into the sheepfold by that Spirit's quickening, or subsequent increasing power over the world, the flesh, and the devil, the witness is the same, “the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. 4:4) “Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” (2 Cor. 3:18) However mighty the work, the object of faith is the same as to the weakest believer—Jesus, and not what He (the Spirit) is doing, in the believer's heart.

Oh yes! the heart must love ere it will serve Him readily; it must know His mind and will ere it can serve Him faithfully; but it can only love Him, as knowing where His love is seen—in Jesus; it can only serve Him truly, as knowing Him who did serve Him faultlessly and faithfully in this same world. All is the witness of the Spirit; but Jesus, the exhibitor of the love which wins the heart—Jesus, the faithful servant—is that to which He testifies.

It is a wonderful thing that God should bring the heart of a poor, proud, self-seeking man into delight with that which is utterly opposed to every feeling of flesh. And how tenderly and graciously He does it! He does not say, Give up the world, deny thyself, crucify the flesh, become abased (that would be hard indeed, though it would be righteous; and we all know those who have fancied He has so said, and they have tried every self-inflicted penance and monkish austerity, but the world was loved still, self was the only object of exaltation through it all). He speaks in gentleness, and tells us of the greatness of His love in the midst of our alienation and rebellion; tells us He loves us, though our hearts are worldly and proud, and our practices selfish and base, and wins us by this love. The testimony of Jesus is the story of this love, the proof of God's love to the sinning man, the ungodly, the proud, the worldly man; the proof that sin was not a sufficient barrier to shut out love, that it has broken that down, and can now flow unchecked into the sinful heart. The heart where this is credited, and therefore received, must return an answer of love, and will know, surely know, that God asks nothing from us to prove our love but what will secure to us increased and increasing peace and joy. It is grace the sinner wants; for that alone can be the connecting-link between him and God; and where is the grace, but in Jesus humbled, brokenhearted, and crucified. This is where God has come down to the sinner, and the sinner's stepping-place to get back to God; the hand of God stretched out to us in our wretchedness, lifting us up again to Himself, and clasping us to His heart. In truth, there can be no service to God except by the sweet constraint of love. The obedience of heaven is the obedience of love; for there can be nothing but love there. There is only one will there; obedience to that will is the unity and harmony of heaven. The results of self-will are clear enough around us in the full tide of misery which is flowing over this rebellious world. It is the same power which rules in heaven, reaching, by the Spirit's presence, the heart of a self-willed sinner, that brings it to subjection, and gives (when it has the mastery there) the joy of heaven, freeing it from its many turbulent and unrighteous masters and giving it but one, and that one love; for God is love.

The more then this love is known, and shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us, the more constrained will the heart be to this happy service, because it will thus judge, that "if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again."

And oh! where is it that we get daily strength, but in tracing the love and the glory that can be only seen in the Father's righteous servant, whose service was both to the Father and to us? Every step so traced will unravel the depths of that grace which has given the heart its peace, and assured it of everlasting glory. And it is this that the Holy Ghost does engrave day by day, deeper and deeper, on the willing heart of the believer, showing him his Lord—Him who was in the beginning with God, and was God, but who was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us—marking the circumstances of evil which surrounded Him from His birth onwards, and so the untiring love which could not be overcome by those circumstances, but which shone the brighter and showed its depths the more as it was scorned and trampled on while pressing on in its might through them all

to finish that work which alone could meet the necessities of the sinner. It is not the cross only, but the character of the evil, which in its power overwhelmed the Lamb of God, and the unconquered compassion which ever shone forth from Him on the darkness which surrounded and would have quenched it—the every day's pitying endurance of the "contradiction of sinners against Himself," even to the moment when the readiness of His heart to bless was seen in the prompt reply of forgiveness to him who had reviled Him during His bitterest agony on the cross. (Compare Matt. 27:24 with Luke 23:43) It is this that shows the depth of the love, a love that existed ever, a love that ordained the victim, that gave the victim (and that victim His only Son) to and for those who hated and disregarded both the giver and gift.

He who delights to trace the steps of Jesus in this grief-stricken world, will see in every step the holiness, the moral glory, and the love of the unseen God, made manifest to him in a form that he can apprehend.

Oh yes, it is knowing God in Jesus, in all the exquisite detail of His most dignified yet condescending love—a love that could, and that did, descend to the depths of degradation and shame, to minister "its sweet consolation to the wretchedness of its object; that came into a world of sin and sorrow, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; to be the lowest and the poorest; to be associated with the most needy and despised of men—the leper, the publican, and the Samaritan—giving His back to the smiters, His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; 'learning obedience by the things that He suffered;' taking part in our sufferings, that, when perfected in His lesson of love, He might be a sympathizing Intercessor for those whose companion in sorrow He had become. It is this, the weakness of Jesus, the poverty of Jesus, the depths of poverty both of spirit and of circumstance, that shows us how far His love can reach, and what that love would do to bless its object that shows us God."

Upon the ground of the soul's present and perfected salvation by the blood of Jesus, the believer stands to meet the practical question of following Him, as made even now by His gratuitous grace, free and ready to serve Him in love, as having but one object, that of showing forth His praises in the world that rejected and still rejects Him. There will be no singularity in the confession of the name of Jesus in heaven; none will be ashamed of Him or of His words there; He will be fully glorified and admired there. But it is here in "this present evil world," in the midst of a crooked and perverse people, that the sinner, separated by the blood of the Lamb to all blessing, is called on to stand forth and declare how Jesus "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Pharisaism and Faith

It is a very sad thing, but, that which ever has to be done, that God and man must be put in opposition one to the other. This refers to the natural state of man, of course. The constant labor of the Spirit, the whole business, so to speak, of the Bible, is to bring out distinctly the true relationships to each other of God and man, and to contrast the state of man with what we find in God. And this after all is blessed, because on one side it is a testimony to God's grace and goodness, as well as to His holiness.

Now this is the reason that "religion" and "religiousness" are the constant and greatest hindrance to truth in the soul. As all truth goes upon the supposition that man and God are as far as they possibly can be one from another, anything that supposes them to have dealings one with another, is therefore that which denies the first principles of truth. The Lord said plainly to the chief religionists of the day, setting all their religion aside, "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." (Chapter 21) And we get the same testimony throughout the whole tenor of His life. The setting up of religion and religiousness assumes that man, such as he is by nature, can have to do with God; but "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Consequently the thing set up against the Lord was not sin and sinners, but "religion." That which hindered Him, crossed His path, took Him to prison, put Him to death, cast Him out of the world, was "religion"—man's religion!

Sad is it, most sad, to see the sinner neglecting the great salvation, denying his lost condition, and concealing from himself his awful doom; but it is still worse to see forms of religion (in those who call themselves by the name of Christ) shutting out God. The power of Satan is shown more, perhaps in religion than in any one thing else. And it has been so from the beginning to the end in man's history. The very first thing that takes place in the heart, the very first effect, when we come to the knowledge of self and of God (as the result of the Spirit's setting the conscience in the presence of God) is, that all our religion disappears. We cannot keep it up, when it is simply a question between the conscience and God. Let the conscience but be brought into the presence of God, and man's religion fails; we discover it to be something that may indeed hide God from us, but not ourselves from God; it all tumbles down when we find ourselves with our sins in presence of the holiness of God, and are really conscious that we have to do with our sins in the sight of God, and not with our religion. We cannot call our sins religion.

This is everyday history. We get it brought out in a very strong light in this chapter; but it is not that which was true of the scribes and Pharisees merely. Anything will suit man, provided it is not his conscience in the presence of God. When God's light shines in, it detects what is in the heart. Man always seeks to conceal heart, just because it is that which cannot bear examination; God opens up the heart, and brings into the conscience the evil of it, because, till that is right, all is wrong. In order that there should be peace in the soul, we must know both ourselves and God; that there is nothing but evil in us; that there is nothing but goodness in God. But then the thought of having our hearts known is terrible, anything rather than that; and we are so habituated to hiding them from

ourselves, and from one another, that we seek to hide them from God, and fancy we can do so. We first set about to be righteous by commands which we cannot fulfill, and then, our conscience nothing satisfied, we add ceremony to ceremony, and tradition to tradition, to eke out a righteousness of our own. There may be a great deal of truth held along with this. Much that the Pharisees held was truth, though there was a great deal of error and superstition mixed up with it. Well, the moment the conscience is really awakened, there is no question of this kind at all; God so exposes the evil of the heart, that we are obliged to say, 'God knows me.' We find ourselves individual sinners in the presence of God, and we have to begin afresh—we have to learn what God's grace is. This is very evident, and it is a most material point.

"Religion" is just the thing that specially comes in between the conscience and God. Now what God is working at is to bring the conscience to Himself, without religion, or anything else between. Until that is done, nothing is done. God is dealing with realities. He detects that which is in the heart, in order that He may make known complete forgiveness, that there may be entire and eternal removal of everything that would mar our fellowship. (See Heb. 9, 10) This is grace. Nothing is more simple, though the heart of man is insensible to it. God may use man as an instrument in effecting this; but the object of the preacher of the gospel is, to bring the conscience of the sinner and God immediately into contact: if his notion stop short of that, it is only setting them in opposition. We may merely like the truth, but that is all nothing; if a man is not brought to God, if he be not, in conscience, standing in the presence of God, he is brought no nearer than he was before; he has only got, so to speak, further from God, for he has more between his conscience and God.

Now it is this that is shown out in the chapter before us; we have the whole history of the feelings of the heart of man, until the Lord brings it down to the place of faith—I say down, because it is brought to the confession of its own nothingness, to say, I am a dog. And then the Lord says, "Great is thy faith." And that is always the case. We shall never find great faith in a man's soul, if he does not confess that he is a sinner, having no title to anything at all—a mere dog.

"Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees which were of Jerusalem." (vs. 1) The scribes were persons learned in the law, and the Pharisees were religionists of the sect most esteemed in religion; as Paul says, "After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee" (Acts 26:5); and they were "of Jerusalem," the very center of God's polity, so that everything that could give the weight of authority to "religion" was there.

And they do come with authority; they say to Jesus, "Why do Thy disciples the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." (vs. 2) But Jesus at once puts both scribes and Pharisees, and their tradition, in direct contact with God. He says to them, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" (vs. 3) He does not go round about and battle the question of this tradition; it might be right enough in some sense; at all events it was reputable in the eyes of man, sanctioned by the learning of the scribes as well as by the religiousness of the Pharisees, and comely in Jerusalem; but He says, 'You are flying in the face of God by your tradition!' He at once closes the point, dropping elders and all besides. Man may plead tradition, the authority of antiquity and the like, but the fact is, he does so but to clothe himself with it. To the Pharisees, this tradition was the tradition of the elders; but to Christ, it was "ye" and "your tradition." He takes hold of them. They were using it to accredit themselves unto

men, not to lay the conscience bare before God. Religiousness and ceremonial holiness accredit us with men; but faith lays us bare before God.

Then He goes on: "For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, He that curseth father and mother, let him die the death. But ye say" (it was their tradition that said it, but He substitutes 'ye'), "Whosoever" (no matter who, or how he says it) "shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (vss. 4-6). It was for their profit; it matters not whether it was money or something else; religion is always turned to a selfish end in man's use of it. He clothes himself with it in order that he may give himself weight before men.

And now the Lord thus sets the condition of the whole people before them: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth" (they were not sinners, in the common sense of the word, that is, irreligious, without any profession of thought about God; quite the contrary, the thing stated of them here is, This people draweth nigh unto me), "and honoureth Me with their lips; BUT their heart is far from Me." It was not the sincerity of conscience, and yet the Lord could use the expression, "draweth nigh." "BUT" (He adds) "in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (vss. 8, 9) All this religion and religiousness is at once disposed of There might be the semblance of what was according to God in the "washing of hands;" for the Lord Himself uses water as the emblem of purity; but it was to answer their own ends, and the Lord says, that, whatever it was, it was a commandment of men—that was all. And it was in vain. There is a worship which is worshipping of God in vain.

It is thus that Christ disposed entirely of what may be called "religion;" God's order, God's commandments, God's will, have been set aside by man in his drawing nigh in his own way to God. If he thinks to draw nigh with his heart, such as it is, what would be the consequence? This the Lord goes on to show. And here we see the awful character of religion without the conscience before God. "Out of the heart," He says, "proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." These are what come out of the heart Man may talk of drawing nigh to God with the heart; but with what kind of heart? How can he draw nigh, when "out of the heart" proceed all these things? There is the difficulty. If man will speak of drawing nigh to God, if he will have his forms of religion, his scribes and Pharisees, his Jerusalem, what is it all? Just what the Lord said; the drawing nigh with the mouth, the honoring with the lip; but with heart far from God. Religious forms, the intricacies of ceremony and tradition, even though in the abstract according to the truth of God, are to our hearts now what Jerusalem was to these Pharisees. All that was known of God, all that God had revealed, and He had revealed much in the figures of the law, foreshadowing better things, was there; but the flesh cannot be bettered by ordinances; and if it was a question of drawing nigh to God, while the heart was what it was, and while the whole character of their religion was that of self, Jerusalem was nothing whatever but a blind to the consciences of men. And have not hundreds of us been going on in the same way, with additional truth, no doubt? We may have liked the truth Christianity has introduced, because it had no power in the conscience and on the heart; yet in principle it was the same thing. The craft and lie of Satan is to take all these things, and to say that a man can draw nigh to God through them, while with his heart he does not. This has been ordinarily Satan's way; he acts more by subtlety, and upon the ground of the truth of God, than by an open and simple lie; aye, more than by infidelity and the

denying of the truth of God. Religion is the thing he uses, and what meets it in the heart of man is the supposition (after all clearly hypocrisy) that man can approach God, put off God with these things, when in truth he is merely seeking to satisfy his own conscience. Satan's lulling conscience asleep through forms of religion, is a very different thing from God's awakening the conscience by the power of truth. There may be the form of truth, and that much insisted on; but where God has not awakened the conscience, religiousness and religion are only put between the conscience and God to hide from God.

Having spoken of religion in the flesh—the heart's religion, as well as of its sin—the Lord now takes up what the heart itself is.

“And He called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” (vss. 10, 11) There is deep instruction here. One might have begun and have argued with a man about Jerusalem until the end of time, he using the most specious arguments, such as that it was God that had established Jerusalem, it was God that had set up the sacrifices (for the sacrifices were in themselves, as to form, true), and the like; and there we might have stood. The Lord sets all this aside. He calls up the “multitude” —no matter who or what they might be (we find it stated, chap. 9:36, that they were “as sheep having no shepherd”); and He addresses Himself directly and completely to what is within. He passes by all that which Satan had known how to use to the blinding of the conscience, and He goes at once to the root of the matter, to this fact— ‘You know that what comes out of the heart is not of God, and that is YOU.’ This exposes the whole question. ‘Talk not of washing the hands; it may have been the tradition of the elders, but it is your religion; that which comes out of the heart is evil, and what a man's nature is he is.’ The Lord addresses Himself to the conscience: if the conscience had been before God, they could not have concealed this truth from themselves. They did not want Pharisees for that; they did not want scribes for that; their own hearts could answer it. The conscience of the simplest man, though hitherto led by ten thousand evil Pharisees, when it is before God, can understand that it is that which cometh out of a man, that which is himself, that defileth a man. “Then came His disciples, and said unto Him, Knowest Thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying” (vs. 12) No wonder! all man's system of Pharisaism is good for nothing, when it comes to be a simple question about why all this evil goes out of the heart of man. No wonder! therefore, they were offended. Man has persuaded himself into the belief that he is not so really lost to what is good as God says he is, and that all this attention to ceremonial observances and the externals of religion is very holy and excellent. But, as it is explained here by our blessed Lord, both leaders and led are “blind” a simple thing; as the prophet expresses it. “The leaders, of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.” (Isa. 9:16) “But He answered and said, Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” (vs. 13) There may be the “form of, godliness,” but if it is not of the Father, if not planted of God, it will be rooted up. God must have realities for eternity; and therefore nothing is eternal that God has not planted. “Let them alone” —a terrible saying, a terrible thing to hear the Lord of love uttering such a word as that, and I do not know that it is ever said about any but religious people. We never hear that lip of love saying, “Let them alone,” or words of the kind, to any but hypocrites; He does not say so to the poor Gentile woman mentioned in the after part of the chapter, though her circumstances were those of the greatest evil. If He must put the heart of such an one to trial, He will do it, but He does not so

speak. "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." (vs. 14) Jesus must be occupied with "the poor of the flock," so He turns and feeds the multitude.

"Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?" (vss. 15, 16) We see here a hankering after hearing something new, instead of the conscience before God—a step lower down, so to speak, of Pharisaism. He is their "Rabbi." They are looking at Him in this character, and therefore, their conscience not being in the presence of God, they cannot understand such a simple thing—the simplest thing that can be—that it is not that which goeth into the mouth, but that which cometh out of the mouth that defileth a man. They have something between the conscience and God. And mark where the "understanding," in God's estimate, is always in the conscience. He is not making learned men (though He does speak wisdom to them that are perfect), but He is bringing sinners to heaven. His dealings are with the heart and conscience; and no matter what it be, a parable or whatever else, I have no "understanding" of it until my conscience is at work, and before God by faith; because, until then, God has not His place, and I have not mine. There is no understanding a single thing between me and God, if He has not His place. I might suppose that I knew a good deal about God, and might reason wonderfully, and explain Him as a lecturer would his subject; but would that be God? Where would be the respect due to Him as God? Would He be acting as Light to me, making manifest my darkness? Not at all. If He had His real place, as God to my soul, I should not be lecturing about Him, I should feel what I am in His presence. No man ever lectured about God in the presence of God. He might seek to explain fully what God is when He was not there; but let His presence be felt, and it would stop the lecture at the moment. That is wherein these disciples failed; they were quick to learn "parables," as no question of conscience. Therefore Christ puts it in the simplest manner; He says, "Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught. But these things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man." (They are part of himself) "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts... these are the things that defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man." (vss. 17-20)

And what else proceeds out of the heart? Why really, when we come to the heart of man, it is like what we have in Deuteronomy (chapter 27) about the law of God. When the details are entered into there, where are the tribes for blessing? We read only of the curse. 'No doubt' (people say) 'bad things came out of the heart of man; but are there not good things also? There is not a word about them here.' "Out of the heart proceed" the evil things mentioned, and these are what God sees. It is not that we are denying that there are amiabilities of nature and the like; there are, but then we see them in irrational animals, as well as in man, with this difference—that there is no pride in the heart of the former about them, while there is in the heart of man. What man is morally in the sight of God is the question. Here the Lord closes with man. We have his history traced down from the scribes and Pharisees to what he is in himself. He is seen, in all the comeliness of "religion," to be completely setting aside the commandments of God, and it ends in the sad catalog of what comes "out of the heart."

Now we get, in what immediately follows, the other side of the picture, the opposite of all this—the heart of God in its own eternal fullness of grace, brought out in the Lord's dealings with (not scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem, but) a woman of Canaan.

“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tiro and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him.” (vss. 21, 22) Tiro and Sidon were anything but Jerusalem; they were places proverbial for their wickedness. The Lord selects them as such when He says (chap. 11), “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tiro and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” He holds them up as two of the vilest cities He could have named. Again: this woman, as a woman of Canaan, not only was a Gentile, a “dog” (vs. 26)—that was her character in the eye of man, yes, and according to the truth of God also, so far as regarded the outward condition of things at that time—but a woman of that people concerning which God had said, “Cursed be Canaan.” (Gen. 9:25)

So that here we get evidently the very opposite to, and that which stands in greatest contrast with, the scribes and Pharisees (the religious persons) of Jerusalem, and indeed with everything that could claim authority in religion, or even the appearance of a fair show in the flesh, a woman of Canaan, out of the coasts of Tiro and Sidon.

But after all, how does this poor woman come? Her need brought her to Christ; so far all was right. But to have our need supplied, we must take the place that befits us. God cannot, so to speak, deny supplying our need; but He will deny till we take our true position. This is the great principle we have to learn here. “She cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word.” (vss. 22, 23) It was a case apparently greatly calling for the Lord’s intervention, and she was entreating Him to interfere. Her daughter was grievously vexed of a devil, and He had come to destroy the works of the devil. She knew what His compassion was, but does she come simply on that ground? No; had she done so, she would have had the closest sympathies of the Lord. But she says, ‘Have mercy on me, Jesus, Thou Son of David!’ Here was faith. She knew what mercies He had brought amongst the Jews; but had she anything to do with Him as the “Son of David”? No; none but a Jew had any claim on Christ, in that character.

The poor woman doubtless thought that, recognizing and confessing Him to be what He was, she might count on the blessing. She came in the way of promise. She owned the very truth of God contained in the promises, and she recognized Jesus as being the One who had come according to those promises. That was the case, and that was the simple reason why the Lord had nothing for her at all.

We may talk about the promises of God, and go away empty. When we talk about promises, they must be promises made to us; promises respecting which we can lay hold upon the truth of God, as the ground of His dealing with us. Now, suppose we come to God as though we were called by the most gracious promises, the moment we confess ourselves sinners, we say that we have title to nothing. A sinner has title to nothing; and therefore we are on wrong ground, just as was this poor woman.

There are promises made for sinners, but there are no promises made to sinners as sinners. Like this Syrophenician woman, we may linger about the promises, and have not a word. We must come as simple sinners without any title at all but our need; that is the only title He admits. He will assuredly bless; for He has said, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” But He will do it by making us know that the depth of our need is just the reason why He does so.

When she cries, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David," her own language binds Him to exclude her; she has not, and cannot have, any claim or title to Him on that ground; He does not know such a person. Here is the point. And therefore, when the disciples come and beseech Him, saying, "Send her away; for she crieth after us" (only wanting to get rid of her as a troublesome beggar, as if they had said 'Give her what she wants, and have done with her'), He answered, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He holds to God's order. (See also chap. 10:5)

It is a most important thing to remember, that promises are not found out of Christ. There are most precious promises to the Christian, without which he could not get on for a day; but then "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2 Cor. 1:20) You may see a person going on lingering about promises, and, until the soul is humbled to the place of faith, until it submits to the truth and righteousness of God, the end of the story will be as the beginning, I cannot realize them.

"Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me." (vs. 25) Now this is a good deal more truthful, and it brings out an answer. Her first appeal had truth in it, but then it was (as we have seen) on a ground to which she had no title; it was just as much as to say, 'Do not answer me.' Now she gets an answer. But then the answer shows that Christ cannot go out of the way of the promises, out of the way in which God has sent Him. He says, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Here is a terrible thing—a terrible thing to be told this by a person in whom she had confided—to be turned away as a dog. And are not hearts now to be found in this condition? They have been sent to Christ for help; they feel their sorrow, and they go to Him looking for promises, and what do they say, I have got peace, I have got joy in God? No, they come back, saying, 'I have got nothing!' They have not come down to the place where God gives help. They are, like this poor Syrophenician woman, Canaanites of Tiro and Sidon, and they have been talking to the Son of David, as though they had something to do with Him, and something to expect from Him.

"And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." (vs. 27) Here is her place; she abandons all title and claim in herself; but her need casts itself on pure bounty. The Lord's eye has all the while been watching the process of humbling that was going on in the heart, and now that He has brought her down to her real condition, He can accede to her every desire. It is not now, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David;" neither yet, "Lord, help me!" Until she gave up that ground (for He could not give it up) He tries her, saying, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." But when she says, 'I am a dog, yet?'—going upon what God Himself is in Christ, she gets upon the simple ground of the infinite fullness of God's love, and all is clear.

Her faith has pierced through dispensations; it has arrived at what God is. She can say, "Truth, Lord, it is to the Jews that the children's bread belongs; I make no pretense to the children's place, I am a poor, wretched sinner of the Gentiles, I know all this; I know that I have title to nothing, as regards promises; but there is plenty of help in God to meet my case; these dogs that are without eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." What can the Lord say more? 'There is no help in God for thee?' Impossible! "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith." There is no need of being a Jew to have faith; the Gentile that believes in Jesus has

reached up to the place whence even the children are fed. No matter what a man is, when it is a question of what there is in God for his need the case is simple. When there is the truthful admission that we have no ground of title whatever, when we meet God in the way of goodness, on the ground of what there is in Himself, all is well; for that goodness is in God.

The Lord is not now looked at in the way of promise (be that never so true), and He cannot deny what God is, and what He is in Himself. He says, "O woman, great is thy faith," and then, what more? "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Whatever request she may have, based on the simple fact of the goodness that God had even for a dog, He cannot help answering. "And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

Such is the difference between Pharisaism and faith. The poor, wretched sinner who comes simply on the ground of being nothing—a sinner without any title at all—to God, as He is, gets plenty of blessing. Then rest and peace are found. We prove Him to be love and nothing else. The soul turns away from self altogether, and feasts on the eternal fullness of grace that is in Christ. It draws on all that is in Him; its need is just its title to all that is in Him. We never see the question rightly, till we see that it is only infinite need that can at all give title to the infinite fullness of God. The converted and unconverted both need to see this. Sinners do not receive Christ because they do not know themselves to be no better than dogs. Saints are often without peace, because they never really have taken the place of dogs. Many would gladly sail over the whole question, and just take the grace without the knowledge of their own vileness; but God will teach us all that is in ourselves, that we may really value all that is in Him. It was on this ground the poor woman could speak to Jesus, and the word is ever to such, "Even as thou wilt." Divine fullness is to be fathomed alone by conscious need and wretchedness.

This is where faith will bring us. We may admit the truth of all that has been said, but if it has not brought us there, down to nothingness in the presence of the infinite fullness of God, it is not truth to our souls; we have not really learned anything. We may have learned the story of the Canaanitish woman, but if we have not learned the story of our own heart in it, we have learned nothing about it. We may be able to explain the doctrines of salvation very clearly; we may be glorying in much that we have received from God; but if we desire blessing and riches (spiritual riches), it must be with us as with the church of Smyrna, of which Jesus could say (Rev. 2), "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty—but thou art rich." Is it so truly with us, or is it still the lingering about promises? Again, even if we are not Pharisees, is it with us as with the disciples, a question of "parables"? There are no parables in the conscience. When a man meets God in his conscience, that man knows himself; he cannot help it. It is not a parable when the conscience is touched, it is what we ourselves are in the sight of God. Let our state be what it may (perhaps an evil one into which we have got by sin, no matter what it is), if we have been broken down, in the humbling consciousness of what we are, to the place of our own nothingness, the only question that remains is, What is God towards us? And He is grace, and to be proved to be such exactly in proportion to our need. Need but becomes then the occasion of displaying the suitability of His grace.

All comes to one single point: if we are before God as what we really are, God is always what He really is—grace.

This is, in a certain sense, hard work—to live in the continual sense of our need, and of God's delight in supplying it. What constant watchfulness does it argue! what walking in the Spirit! what abnegation of self! The Lord grant us the continual sense of our emptiness, and also the continual sense of His fullness, that we may take our true place as dependent on His grace and bounty.

Omniscience: A Word on God's Searchings

Psalm 139

It is a solemn thought for the soul to be under the searching of Omniscience itself. Yet this is the foundation of solid peace to him who believes the gospel of the grace of God. The searching of Omniscience, moreover, gives real value to the present priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ; and it will be found also the only ground of practical holiness. In this respect there is an essential difference between him that is spiritual, and a man even of deep thought and high intellect. He that is quickened by the Spirit, is frequently able to interpret things strange and paradoxical to others. "The spiritual man judgeth all things," and he knows "the end of the Lord."

Every human being has been searched by Omniscience, whether he is conscious of it or not. This will be made clear "in the day when God will judge the secrets of men." The searching of "the thoughts and intents of the heart" by the Word of God now, is the means of bringing God's knowledge into application to our conscience before "that day." And when this is the case, then are we conscious that our thoughts are understood afar off, and that there is not a word in the tongue, but the Lord knoweth it altogether. He has "beset us behind and before." He can look backward, and He can look forward also. All our history is before Him, as if it had been written after we had run our course. "O Lord, Thou hast searched me," is the language of the Psalmist; not "Thou art doing it now, or wilt do it hereafter, but Thou hast done it already." "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off Thou winnowest (marg) my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways." (vss. 1-3)

We do not like to have our paths winnowed. We like to be accredited by men for our zeal and devotedness. But when our paths are winnowed, all our thoughts are discovered and opened to us. If God acted toward us according to our experience of ourselves, what believer would not have his peace disturbed? The practical experience of "the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our hearts" is from bad to worse. Herein is the great error of that which is termed progressive sanctification. God is not forming a people for their own, but "for His praise." He is showing them what they are in themselves, in order to show them by His Spirit the blessed suitability of Christ to all their need. If God be winnowing our path, it is on the ground that He has searched us already, known us altogether, and provided for what He knows we need. "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." This is a painful process, either "pricking the heart," and leading to godly sorrow (Acts 2); or "cutting the heart" (Acts 7:54), stinging the conscience. And the Word of God is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. And when the Word thus performs its office, it leads us to value the priesthood of Christ. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest."

We can never get from under this searching process “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.” (vss. 7-12) The Lord Jesus says to the church of Thyatira: “All the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts.” When God quickens a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, He makes him to know what it is to be, not only a sinner by acts of disobedience, but a sinner by nature, that sin “dwelleth” in him. And this He does by searching him, and winnowing his paths, and making him, in measure, see himself even as God sees him.

The Lord Jesus did not commit Himself to those who believed in His name, when they saw His miracles, “because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man.” (John 2:23-25) With the fairest outside, both as to candor and religion, He knew what was in man. Others might have judged that conviction was the groundwork of their faith; but such is man’s heart, that miracles do not produce solid conviction. Jesus knew this, for He knew all men. Israel of old saw “the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians.” “Then believed they His words, they sang His praise. They soon forgot His works.” And when the Lord again visited Israel, this was the testimony, “Ye also have seen Me, and believe not.” “Though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him.” His own select disciples, the eye witnesses of His miracles, forsook Him and fled, when He was betrayed into the hands of men.

When the searching of Omniscience discovers to one what it really is to be a sinner, and that good does not dwell in him, that is in his flesh, it discovers also that the ground on which God is acting towards him is that of the fullest grace.

The God who knows all our hearts, knows that these hearts are beyond measure worse than all the sins we have committed. His verdict against man is still the same that it was before the flood, “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth;” “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.” All the progress of man has not set aside this verdict of God.

We must recognize then that God knows us, knows us just as we are, knew us from the very outset, as He says to Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:5); or as later with the apostle: “When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace” (Gal. 1:15) God knows us from the beginning to the end of our course; His estimate of us is, “The flesh profiteth nothing;” and it is well if we lay down this estimate as our first axiom. But then the same God has spoken to us in the gospel of the remission of sin. But it is remission of sin according to His omniscience, therefore, of all sin; and if God speaks to us of the righteousness of faith, it is, according to His omniscience, “everlasting righteousness.”

“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever,” has thrown the efficacy of what He Himself is into all that He has done. He has offered one sacrifice for sins of abiding efficacy. He has “obtained eternal redemption,” and “brought in everlasting righteousness.” He has “perfected forever them that are sanctified.” He is “consecrated a priest for evermore.” All the value of the

work and offices of Christ flows from the glory of His person. The whole question between God and the awakened sinner is settled upon the ground of the unalterable value of what Christ has done. In this sense, the word progressive is human, not divine. "It is finished" excludes the idea of progression. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, or anything taken from it: and God doeth it that men may fear before Him." "Progress" is necessarily associated with change, but truth is immutable. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." We have all truth in the Word and the Spirit to guide into all truth. The work of the Lord Jesus Christ is commensurate with, yea, rises infinitely above, all our need as sinners. There are things reported unto us by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, to tell out heaven's estimate of Christ's sufferings, and the glory to follow, which angels desire to look into. (1 Peter 1:12)

The great hindrance to solid peace is a reasoning still in our own minds as to whether we are really as bad as God knows us to be. It is expecting to find ourselves better and better in ourselves, instead of seeing that God acts upon His own omniscience as to what we are, and not upon what we are thinking of ourselves, and presents to us His own estimate of Christ's work and priesthood. The gospel is "the gospel of God." (Rom. 1:1) It is God who bears witness to the total ruin of man, and it is the same God who bears testimony to the complete efficacy of Christ's work. This is of all importance; for no one perfectly knows the badness of his own heart, and no one perfectly knows the perfections of Christ. We shall be learners throughout eternity of Christ's perfections.

"I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (vs. 14) Most marvelous! Look at man; is he not most skillfully and wonderfully contrived? Physically and morally, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. If we regard the second Man, the Lord from heaven, Immanuel, God with us, the One testified unto by Jehovah of hosts as "the Man my fellow," Him who fills the highest heavens, and yet was down here a babe in a manger, who could command the waves and still the storm, but was buffeted by His creatures—how fearfully and wonderfully made! But we are looking at the psalm in another aspect, and who so fearfully and wonderfully made as one quickened by the Spirit, the believer in God's testimony to His Son? The believer holds to two heads. As naturally constituted, we are under "the law of sin and death." Men may deny that man is so constituted; but the fact is before our eyes, that no progress man has made, no advancement, no cultivation, no invention, has liberated him from "the law of sin and death." This is what human philanthropy cannot achieve. But it is here divine philanthropy begins. "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." (Eph. 2:4,5) "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. 8:2) How fearfully and wonderfully are believers made, holding both to the first and to the second Adam! And when we look within, how fearfully and wonderfully made! Our souls know what it is to leave things here behind, and to find Christ excellently precious; and then some vain trifle comes in and pulls us down, and makes us more intensely interested about the passing trifle than all the solid realities which are in Christ Jesus. Those who have learned something of themselves, know how often their songs of gratitude and praise are succeeded by murmurings, as with Israel of old; yea, they know how the atheistic thought that would dethrone God has battled with the spirit which would fain praise God for redeeming grace and delivering mercy. Those who are taught by the Spirit of truth are learning the unmitigated evil of the flesh. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither

shadow of turning.” In practice we often contradict this truth, probing into that which is below, and only learning disappointment. But God is never disappointed when we are disappointed. He leads us to be disappointed with ourselves, in order that we may better learn our need of and be satisfied with Christ. It is hard and painful to us to be stripped of self, to be searched and winnowed. We become disappointed with the world, disappointed with other Christians (and this may be needful); but when God winnows our path, we learn to be thoroughly disappointed with ourselves.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. But “we are His workmanship.” We are not workers, for “by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship.” And this we are “to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,” as well as that “in the ages to come He may show forth the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.” The church of the living God is God’s peculiar workmanship. There is a false church, the workmanship of man under the guidance of Satan, a foil to the true church. If Christ has a bride, there is a harlot audaciously claiming this honored place. If God has His city, the heavenly Jerusalem, man is rearing Babylon (let us beware of her delicacies). If there are those who are sealed with the seal of the living God in their foreheads, there are those who have the mark of the beast. But the church of the living God is so peculiarly the workmanship of God, that whenever man has attempted to uphold, strengthen, or form it, he has undermined, weakened, and marred it. God is a jealous God, and He is very jealous of man’s presumption in interfering with His church.

“My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” (vss. 15, 16) We may remark in passing, that “substance yet being imperfect” is one word in the original. Our translators have made use of a strange word, imperfect, in order to show that the sense is not that of imperfect. The newborn babe is a perfect human being, as truly as a man. The rudiments of man are all wrapped up in the babe. The eye of God sees all these rudiments before they are unfolded. When a sign was given from heaven to the shepherds, it was, “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger;” a strange sign, yet the testimony of heaven, and faith’s acknowledgment, was to that babe, as Christ Jehovah.

Disappointed as we must needs be with ourselves, let us well mark this, that with respect to the members of Christ’s mystical body, God sees in every one of them the rudiments of that which shall shine forth in the day of Christ, to the praise of His glory. We might avail ourselves of many things in nature in illustration, as for instance the fragile egg of a bird. That egg is perfect, but we do not see in it the bill, the foot, or the wing on which the future lark shall rise toward heaven, trilling its sweet song. But God sees all these there. He did not tell Abraham, A father of many nations will I make thee, but “I have made thee.” It is written, “Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them

He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” God must speak His own language. There are links in the divine chain, and our experience may come in as though to separate them; but God sees in each “vessel of mercy” one “afore prepared unto glory.” The members of Christ’s mystical body are being here formed out of strange materials, and in a strange place, for that hour when they shall be glorified saints. Angels see God’s works in creation, in providence, and in those things in which they are the executors of His will, but they see nothing to compare with the wonderful workmanship of God in quickening into life those who were dead in trespasses and sins. But how unlike are such to glory! groaning in bodies of sin and death; groaning in the midst of and with a groaning creation—how unlike glory! But God sees us “yet being unperfect.” He sees us through and through, and He sees us as His grace has made us to be in Christ. He too has made provision for us in Christ, for all that He knows we need. “He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

There is a blessed turn in the psalm at verses 17, 18, “How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand...” This is a blessed theme, the theme of God’s thoughts—higher, as the heavens are higher than the earth, than our thoughts, the theme of God’s fathomless and illimitable grace. Here there is real liberty. Do we know what it is to have our own thoughts, so narrow, so beggared, so mean, beaten down by God’s high, generous, liberal thoughts—His thoughts of us as to what we are in Christ? “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore” (says Jesus), “that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto ME” Jesus is the great thought of God—God’s thoughts are expressed to us in Him. It is not an unfallen angel, but a sinner quickened by the Spirit of God, who can thus get into the deep thoughts of God. When He is winnowing our ways, how precious are His thoughts to us! We sometimes try to put one another to shame, to degrade one another; but God works for an expected end. He only humbles us in order to exalt us; He suffers us to hunger in order to “prove us, and do us good at our latter end.”

The time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God. He will search each individual Christian, and make him consciously know the ground on which he can stand before God. “If it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” We can understand the meaning of the word scarcely, when our path is winnowed. It does not imply either uncertainty or imperfection in the salvation which is of God, but we learn that salvation must be of God, and our constant need of it. Finished and complete in itself, faith apprehends it as continually needed, as though our whole life was one of escapes, and “He that is our God is the God of salvation.” “He hath delivered, He doth deliver, in whom we trust that He will yet deliver.” Those who, in exercise of soul, find out what is in their own hearts, well know that all that is going on in the world around them is but the manifestation of the very evil, the principles of which God has been discovering, and they have been judging, in their own hearts.

There is a present restraint, under God’s hand, on man’s evil. Once for a moment God removed it: “This is your hour, and the power of darkness.” Again He will remove it, and men will be given over to “strong delusion, to believe a lie: that they all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.” The present moment is a solemn one—popery and semi-popery spreading on the one hand, rationalism and infidelity on the other. Of our own selves we must

judge righteous judgment. "Surely Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God." (vss. 19, 20) If He is sifting His own people, He will judge all this proud Christianity, whether sacerdotal or sacramental efficacy, or despising lordship and government. But is the knowledge of being delivered from the wrath to come to settle us in self-complacency? By no means; but under the sheltering certainty that God has searched and known us (as expressed in the first verse of this psalm), we can turn this truth into a prayer, and say, in the words of the concluding verses, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (vss. 23, 24) None but he who knows the shelter of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the mercy-seat of God, and is conscious that God has already searched him, and known him, could put up such a prayer. God must be acknowledged as Omniscient. We need Him to help us in searching ourselves, because we are partial in self-judgment. The beam is in our own eye, the mote in our brother's eye, and nothing but the Spirit of God can enable us to get the beam out. It is He who searches the reins and hearts who has said, "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more;" and it is because He remembers them no more, that we can ask Him to show us what debtors we are to His grace.

There was once a man of like passions with ourselves, one who had cursed, and sworn, and denied his Lord, but for whom that Lord had prayed, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." And after this terrible sifting, when the Lord searched him, twice he answered readily to the challenge, as oft repeated— "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." But the question was repeated a third time: "And Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." The Lord, in order to get at the bottom of our hearts, may have to remove a great heap of rubbish, such as self-confidence, pride and vanity; but He knows what His own grace has done for us, and He will find His love at the bottom of our hearts. He had to remove a great deal from Peter, a mass of fleshly confidence and forward zeal; He may have to take away from us much of that in which we have gloried; but after all He will bring out, "Thou knowest that I love Thee," personal affection for Himself. In the winnowing of our paths, much may have to be winnowed out that has been cherished more than Christ Himself, but there is at the bottom faith in Christ, and love to Christ. What a mixture of double-mindedness, of pride, of vanity, there is in the best thing we do. Our prayers, our praises, and our service are so poor and worthless, and yet we are proud of them. We seek praise from our fellow men for the very things we have to confess, as tainted with sin, before God. What need therefore to bare our hearts, and say, "See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"? We, perhaps, are not able to detect some particular evil in our own souls, and others may not suspect it. There are instances in which we may thankfully say, "I know nothing by myself;" yet how needful to add, "yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord." But when the Lord applies Himself to His priestly discerning judgment, as the One who searcheth the reins and trieth the heart, we may be led to one discovery after another of some crookedness of motive, sufficient of itself to disturb our peace, but used by the Lord to lead us into "the way everlasting." And is not this way Christ Himself, the only way, the true way, the living way, the way everlasting?

How prone are we to depart from this way, therefore is He pleased to search out our own ways, that He may lead us therein, to show us that Christ must be practically to us that which He

declares Himself to be in His Word— “The first and the last,” our “Alpha and our Omega.” Happy is it if we are under that process which, however humbling to ourselves and humiliating in the eyes of others, leads us still to justify God in using it, and to say, “Search me, O God.”

All is well that leads us “in the way everlasting,” that beats us out of our own ways and brings us there, that makes us in result value Christ for the way as well as at the outset, and the end—Christ learned as our portion to live upon, as well as known for the pardon of our sins.

The Lord grant to all His people the blessed secret of self-judgment. “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” But if we do not, and are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, “that we may not be condemned with the world.”

When the flesh is not put down as nothing, the Holy Ghost acts in controversy, not in energy.

Faith, though it has a large stock to draw from in God, has no purse or scrip in man wherein to carry about the expenses of the journey. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

The Lord will neither hasten, nor delay, nor change His movements because of our thoughts; neither will He teach concerning His movements those who will argue and think out truth, instead of praying it out.

In the Bible, in the church, in the dispensations of the whole of God’s providence there are things to be joined, but God must join them; there are difficulties to be reconciled, but we cannot solve the problem.

See that the wound which sin hath made in thy soul be perfectly cured by the blood of Christ, not skinned over with duties, tears, or enlargements. Apply what thou wilt besides the blood of Christ, it will poison the sore.

If any one, instead of looking for the Holy Ghost’s guidance, dabbles with his own mind in Scripture, he will see either something in the book which is not there, or the contents of the book out of their proper order and relative importance.

It is safer to be humble with one talent, then proud with ten.

Depend upon it, if there is not the slaying of the lion and the bear in secret, there will be no killing of Goliath in public. (1 Sam. 17:36)

A man is really what he is before God, and no more.

When Christ was praying, Peter was sleeping; when Christ was submitting, Peter was fighting; when Christ was suffering like a lamb, Peter was cursing and swearing. This is just the flesh—in energy when we ought to be still; sleeping when we ought to be working.

It is better to trust God in doing His will, than the consequences which doing His will may produce, however blessed.

It is a very sad thing to say, but we like our own flesh, generally, a great deal better than we do the flesh in others.

Growth in grace manifests itself by a simplicity—that is, a greater naturalness of character. There will be more usefulness, and less noise; more tenderness of conscience, and less scrupulosity.

Self-will is so ardent and active, that it will break a world in pieces, to make a stool to sit upon.

He that never changed any of his opinions, never corrected any of his mistakes; and he who was never wise enough to find out any mistakes in himself, will not be charitable enough to excuse what he reckons mistakes in others.

Abigail, the Wife of Nabal the Carmelite

In order to have practical communion with the mind of God, through the Scriptures, whilst the conflict still remains between the flesh and the Spirit, it is needful that the soul be established in grace. Now Satan seeks to hide the simplicity of this grace; but it is simple grace towards those who were dead in trespasses and sins that has met us. As the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, so was Jesus on the cross, and He is presented to us by God as the object of our faith. When we look to Him, God says, "Live." The next thing that Satan seeks to hide from us, is God's preserving grace; and this he does by bringing in many inventions of His own. God preserves us by something hidden in heaven. We may be looking at our experience, to outward observances, to an outward priesthood, and the like; but if it is not that which is hidden in heaven, connected with the precious blood of Jesus and His priesthood, to which we are looking, it must come from him who is the "father of lies." All those things which tend at all to promise the soul preservation, apart from this, lead astray.

There is, then, to all believers, sure and everlasting acceptance, because of the precious blood of Jesus which has been shed for them. "Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves; but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. 9:11,12) This secures their blessing and peace forever. Nothing can shake or alter the peace that subsists between the Father and the Son, nothing that crosses our path here, none of the circumstances of earth, can alter the peace of the sanctuary. It is established forever between the Father and Jesus. So that whenever a believer seeks it, whatever the condition of soul in which he may turn towards God, the peace of the sanctuary is there—unchanged. How precious the assurance of this! The soul that has learned anything of God, and of His holiness, know; how every hour many a thing crosses the path likely to effect this peace—that soul must prize the unchanged peace of the sanctuary.

But we know other blessings also. God would have the saints understand and love Him and His ways here—His actings in the midst of an unholy earth, where Satan's seat is. He (God) desires that we should have communion with Himself in His thoughts about all around. By-and-by the church will participate with the Lord in the exercise of power towards the earth—we shall share His glory, for we are "joint-heirs with Christ." But besides this there is the place of present association in service. And this must be in humiliation. Jesus served God, in the midst of circumstances of evil, and the "contradiction of sinners."

We read of the Apostle Paul saying, "By the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Now very often (our thoughts are apt to dwell so much and so exclusively on acceptance) this passage, "By the grace of God I am what I am," is looked at as only having to do with acceptance; but the Lord desires that we should abundantly serve Him in the midst of Satan's world—having, it may be, to conflict not only with evil in ourselves, but with

evil in others; and nothing but His grace can enable us to do this. It is as much the “grace of God” that has given us to serve, and the “grace of God” that strengthens for service, as it was the “grace of God” that saved us at the beginning.

When “Christ ascended up on high,” He “gave gifts unto men. Some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for (or in order to) the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Eph. 4) You will perceive how the grace of God leads that way; namely, to strengthen and qualify for service. Thus, if any teach you, they do it, not merely that you may be blessed, but so blessed as to become servants to others—life in you ministering to life in them, and strengthening that which needs to be strengthened. Now, suppose this be not understood, that I do not see it to be my privilege, I may be very thankful to have one to teach me, but my faith will be weak, and my prayers hindered, I shall not have the right object before me. Teaching amongst the saints is not intended simply to open up truth unto them, to tell them what salvation is, or to give them comfort; but also to open out and direct the soul to those things which God desires should be the objects of service in faith, as it is said, “Your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.” I need not say, beloved friends, how often we stop short of this, and rest in our own personal blessing. When the soul once recognizes it to be the intention God has in view, in strengthening us, that we should serve Him in serving others, it gets quite a new motive for which to live—something worth living for.

Now, I know nothing more important or more blessed than the being able to discern the true service of Christ in the world. Nothing more marks the difference between a soul taught of the Spirit, and one untaught of Him, than this. It was a blessed thing—the great test of faith, when the Lord Jesus was here, to be able to discern and confess Him, as what He really was—the Son, and sent One of God. And so, at the present moment, the leading of the Holy Ghost is always towards the distinct recognition of that which is of God in the world. Till Jesus comes again, this will be found in the lowly place, that which the flesh likes not to own, but which the Holy Spirit loves to recognize. He leads the enlightened soul to say, “There will I cast in my lot; for there blessing is.”

Such parts of Scripture as that on which we are now meditating bring us into communion with the servants of God—the family of faith in past ages. They show us that in principle their trials were like our trials, their conflicts like our conflicts, and thus knit our hearts to them in a way which nothing else can.

David had gained the place in which we find him here because he was of faith, and because Saul was one who was not of faith. He represents the person with whom the truth and the calling of God is. As a simple stripling, David had been taught to trust in God—the God of Israel. When the lion and the bear came, he had faith to meet the lion and the bear, and to overcome them. This was a matter between David and God in secret. But very soon after, David’s faith enabled him to come forward, not for his own deliverance, but for that of God’s Israel. Faith led him to take up the current of the counsels of God. As a Christian goes onward in his career, though the trials he has to encounter may be greater, he goes on in the current of the counsels of God; and thus, as Paul says, he is led about in triumph in Christ. Greater things may be done, yet in one sense they are felt to be easier, because he becomes more acquainted with the strength of God. But this path must begin in secret, and then shall we be led onward of God.

To return to the scene before us. God had anointed David king. Saul was still in power, having offices which none but one who was of faith could sustain. David did not lift his hand in vengeance against Saul—he left all that was connected with the place of the flesh, and took his place as an outcast, simply and singly in the wilderness. There he was glad of any countenance, of any support. Just so is it at the present hour with the servants of Christ, who seek to walk in the truth—those, in a spiritual sense, of the lineage of David. The more they walk in it, the more sensitive will they become to anything of kindness and love which comes in their way; for their hearts will be often worn and weary. I suppose there is nothing more gladdening to the soul that desires the good of others and the glory of God, than to see any uniting with itself for the truth's sake. The “cup of cold water,” any little act of kindness, connects such with the truth of God. In this there is distinct and precious service—“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto ME.” God only sees the heart; but where there is one who says, “I receive, and countenance, and desire to cast in my lot with persons who are walking in the truth, suffering for righteousness' sake”—there blessing will be.

David was in need—here was another not in need. Rich in the earth, surrounded by this world's goods, living in abundance—such was the character of Nabal. (vs. 2) David grudged him not his prosperity (nay, doubtless, he felt that he would not have exchanged his place for Nabal's); it was no hard message that he sent: “I do not ask thee,” he says, “to leave thy riches and follow me; I say, Peace both to thee, and peace to thy house, and peace unto all that thou hast; only wilt thou show kindness unto me; wilt thou give me that which I need?” (vss. 6-8) The heart of David was large enough to have rejoiced in anything that would have identified Nabal's place with his. And so ever, when the heart of a saint is in a gracious state, there will not be the grudging of those around, nor yet the disposition to say, “See what I am, and what you are not.” No, that heart will rather seek to bind the connecting link between another and itself.

God deals in grace. He knew what the end of Nabal would be, yet this was the gracious test which He put to him. And if there had been a spark of grace in Nabal's heart, of anything according to God, it must have answered to the test. But there was not. His eye was fixed upon outward circumstances; his rough, outward thought about David's position was this: “Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants that break away nowadays, every one from his master.” (vs. 10) Now we must remember, dear friends, that we have all of us, naturally, this Nabal feeling (there is no heart without it) as well as other evil; and about this, even as believers, we have to watch and judge ourselves. I ask you, whether, because you desire to serve God, there is ready willingness, in full freedom of heart, to give all that countenance and fellowship which you are able to others who may stand in need of it! This may be done in the way of support, or comfort, or sympathy, either in temporal or spiritual things. Love will find out many a way.

In the present day there are not a few who, it may be, seem to some of us to shrink from and shun the circumstances in which they find themselves placed. But about this we may misjudge them, and be saying, in principle, the same thing that Nabal said, little aware of the deep inward struggle and anxiety there has been. David had given up much; many a tie had been broken, many a struggle gone through, ere he took this position. So that, though it was true, in one sense, that he had “run away from his master,” how different was the act in the eyes of God and of man. That which is outward soon attracts the eye, when perhaps it requires patient, diligent investigation to find out the truth. If the soul desire fellowship with God in His thoughts and ways, there must be

this diligence, otherwise we shall never know what to encourage and what not. Depend upon it, all truth, the more it is known and acted on, the more will it lead into the isolated place.

But we may learn a deep and practical lesson from what is shown out here of David's heart—David was like many of us are often found, when anything comes upon us unexpectedly, he was unprepared to meet, in steadfastness of grace, that which God allowed to be in his path.

No doubt he considered the slight and dishonor put upon him by Nabal "most uncalled for," "most unjust," "rather too much to bear." But he was wrongly roused. And how often is this the case with the saints of God. They dwell on circumstances, instead of turning from circumstances to God, and then acting amidst them according to Him They say, perhaps, 'How unkind! How unjust! Do I deserve this treatment? Is it not quite right to be angry?' Thus the place of grace is lost. Day by day a thousand things act on our spirits in one way or another, which are calculated to produce trying and painful effects. Now, if these be met in fellowship with God, they afford an occasion for bringing forth blessed fruit; but if not, we ourselves become contaminated, and have to confess sin. So that instead of (as the hymn says) Satan trembling and fleeing from us in every conflict, he often thus gains advantage over us. It is a blessed thing to be able to praise God for having enabled us practically to triumph and overcome. And this we should seek to attain. The Apostle Paul could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," and "none of these things move me." We can always praise God for what He is in Himself, and for what He has made us in Christ; but we might also praise Him for our own practical victory over Satan and over the world.

"Mid mightiest foes most feeble are we,
Yet trembling in ev'ry conflict they flee;
The Lord is our banner, the battle is His,
The weakest of saints more than conqueror is."

Very often, beloved friends, the state in which we are would forbid our thus praising God. I mention this, not at all to discourage, but rather that we may be able to separate between what we are in Christ, and our own practical condition as overcomers. Look again at David: he was in danger, not only of not overcoming, but of being overcome and falling into deep sin. How did he act, as the servant of God, bearing meekly Nabal's taunts and cutting reproach? Did he take it up in the name of God? No; it was in the spirit of his own wounded pride.

There was one, however, in the house of Nabal, and bound to him too by a tie which none but God could break, of altogether a different character to Nabal; one who belonged to the Lord—a woman of faith. Abigail was able to discern in David (outcast and needy wanderer though he was) the anointed one of the God of Israel, him whom God was surely about to bring to greatness, as the chosen head of His people: "The Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord." Abigail was able to follow the path of David with the eye of faith, and to put herself on to the hour of his glory. Now this shows that her soul was deeply taught of God. But then the very circumstance of her being thus taught of God must have made her situation in Nabal's house most painful, and her connection with him a yoke. Harassed every day—finding hindrances from, but having no communion with him to whom she was bound—able

to see the folly of Nabal's position, and to contrast it with that of the man of faith, she might have felt this to be a strange dealing of the Lord towards her. But her heart was being prepared for a service which before she knew not. She might have said, Why is it thus with me? Were I in other and different circumstances, what blessing, what happiness should I feel in serving the servants of God; but here I am hindered. Many a soul is thus brought (not by self-chosen paths) into a very trying and painful position, distinctly from the desire to serve God. Now no real desire to serve God will ever be in vain. God may make some way for its being answered, even now and the time will come when this will be fully the case. Meanwhile there is great profit and discipline of heart in having our neck bowed to the yoke, in being brought to submit to God. Moses was not bound to Pharaoh's house, and therefore in faithfulness he quitted it for the Lord's sake. So with Abraham and his father's house. But there may be circumstances, as those of Abigail, which must be endured, where the soul is called to bear the yoke and to wait upon God. Yet these will be full of abundant blessing. There is in them a secret breaking of the will, and bruising of the flesh, which will be found most profitable in after service to God.

Abigail, in her place of quiet retirement, stood much more in the place of communion with the truth than David. She was able to check the wrong feeling of even the man of faith. Whilst David was lost, as it were, in the mist of his own thoughts, Abigail brought in the clear light of the truth to bear on his actions. And David owned, and thanked God for her counsel "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand." (vss. 32, 33) These were the words of David, when alive to the sin in which his pride had set him.

Now, beloved friends, who would have thought that Abigail would ever have been the counselor of David—one, suffering so much for, so beloved of God, so distinctly his servant, high in grace and in faith—one far beyond Abigail, as she would have thought. And yet she was tried, and kept where she was alone, until the time came for her to be the effectual monitor of David, and intercessor for Nabal.

Observe the teaching of God. She took the blessed place of intercession. David, in his wrath, was just about to give the blow, to avenge himself with his own hand, instead of leaving the case in the hand of God. Now this would have taken away one of the most blessed features in the character of David—the leaving all things to God. In Abigail's words we see the strong power of faith. She said, "The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that He hath, spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel, that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offense of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid." (vss. 29-31)

If David had placed himself forward thus to the time of his glory, he would never have thought of raising his hand to give the blow, or of shedding causeless blood; whereas: we know that his hands were nearly imbrued in that of the very young men who spoke so kindly of him to Abigail. (vss. 14-17) Had he thought, How, in the hour of my glory, will this action appear to me? he would

have been checked.

The place of faith is always to look beyond present circumstances, on to the time of the end; then we begin to see and judge of things according to God; Thus it was with Abigail. And when we realize our association with God, and the appointed end of glory, we shall act as she did. In the most trying things which happen to us, if we can by faith associate ourselves with God, if we can see Him with us as our friend, the One who hath said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" we shall never feel disposed to avenge ourselves, or think of anything, save intercession, as it regards those who may have grieved and wronged us. The present actings of God are in grace and mercy. We should rather seek to bring down, and subdue, and melt. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." There is nothing so suitable, now, as taking the place of grace, and desiring to bring under its power whatever meets us individually.

How highly honored was this poor tried and solitary witness for God in Nabal's house.

The honor will come when the hand of God will give the final blow. Nabal was spared by David, but God was about to deal with him in his own way, He cared for none of these things that were transpiring around him. He understood them not. Intercession had been made for him, he was careless about it; the recipient of mercy, he passed that by. "He held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken." (vs. 36) But when that was over, his wife simply told him what had happened—a tale of mercy and of grace. Yet though told in the simplicity of truth, it was as words of death to Nabal, it withered his heart, and "he became as a stone." (vss. 37, 38) The hand of God was against him.

Now this is intended to throw a very solemn shade over the chapter. Such is the end of all that is not of faith. The very things that are truly blessed turned into the power of withering. This will be felt to the full by-and-by, when persons are able to look back at mercies received, but see themselves entirely separated from all blessings, and from the God that gave them. This is remorse. There is nothing so painful as remorse, the sense of circumstances of mercy which have eternally passed away, and the person who has received them forever separated from God.

Nabal's way was "folly," and his end was that of "the fool." But thus will it be with everything around that disowns communion with the ways and with the lowly place of David. He said, "Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give them unto men whom I know not whence they be?" (vs. 2) Abigail knew whence they were, and she thought lightly of all these things compared to the service of God. Now, although we may not be like Nabal, yet still we have each of us this Nabal propensity to watch against the habit of soul which would incline us to say, my bread, my goods, my reputation, my standing, and so on, wherever the word "air" comes across the blessed privilege of being identified with Christ in the lowly place. No heart can be more miserable than one having the Spirit condemning its ways, and if there be this seeking of our own things and not of the things which be Christ's, the Spirit of God must condemn and be against it. Very often you will find in saints who have sought to serve God that when they come to die they have not the same joy as those who have been just converted. Look at the thief who believed in Christ after he hung upon the cross, and at one who has served God, it may be, for twenty years. Though both are equally accepted and made complete in Christ, yet the latter ought to be able to say, in addition to that which the poor thief said, "I have kept the faith." It is a thing of deep importance even to the practical peace and joy of the saints to be in circumstances where

the desires of the Spirit are met. This is not said to hinder or take away the joy of the feeblest saint. If there be need for humiliation, let it be. But whether we be led to prayer, or praise, or humiliation, let it have the character of truthfulness before God.

We see then the end of Nabal. Nevertheless, awful as that end was, it freed Abigail from her painful situation, and she became associated with him, upon whom she knew the blessing of God to rest. (vss. 39-42) She gave up her house, her riches, all, it would seem, to cast in her lot with him who was as yet a wanderer, hunted for his life “as a partridge in the mountains.”

But soon the scene is changed. Abigail is taken captive, and apparently about to be separated forever from David. (Chapter 30) How strange, after a little moment of blessing, to be placed in circumstances more terrible than before! But this only opened a further occasion for faith. Supposing there had been any undue feeling of elation, any unsubdued thought in Abigail's mind, how must this trial have been felt by her as chastening from the hand of God. Otherwise she may have acted in very distinct and holy faith, receiving the blessing as directly from God. Blessings must be received in one or other of these ways. If exalted, and walking in the flesh, she must have felt the blow as chastisement, and been taught by it to humble herself; to judge her ways, and consider the difference between resting in the creature and in God. But suppose she had received and sustained her situation, in the power of faith, this trial would only strengthen her faith, and thus God would be glorified, whilst she was taught a lesson of the weakness of nature, and of the danger of resting in the creature instead of in God. Sooner or later the time must come, when we are brought to feel the nakedness of the creature. When flesh and heart fail, none but God can be our strength.

It is for us to consider, which of the places brought before us in this chapter is ours. We may not be able to take the forward place of David, but then there is that place of Abigail—at least, we can look at that which is suffering for the sake of Jesus, and give it all, or a portion of that we have. It is not the measure or amount, the question is, whether there be the link between us and them? I trust, through the Lord's mercy, all are able to see distinctly what was the place of Nabal, and to turn from it, as Abigail did. We should be conscious of the trials and difficulties of others, and never think lightly of them, or of any evil in Satan's world.

I know of nothing that will so open the Scriptures, and guide our thoughts as to passing events, and as to those with whom we should seek to become identified, as acquaintance with these things. Seek then to have your souls deepened in the knowledge of them, to judge of present circumstances as placing yourselves on, by faith, to the time of the end. David will then have to see standing before him, Uriah; and Paul, Stephen; to whose death he was accessory. It is a marvelous thought; but will Paul's or David's joy be less on this account? No; there will be a power of blessing, such as none but God can give, that will take away every such bitter sting. I say this, believe me, not to make light, of sin, but to associate your minds with that hour. Past sins cannot be undone; seek not to have those things or persons about you now, that you might not be able to think of with joy. If you bring in the thought of that day on your ways, you will soon be able to discern the nature of all around. There never is a soul that seeks to bring in God's judgments on its ways, that does not glorify God. Faith, though feeble, must lead to the glory of God. There may be faith about trivial things, about things that we could not speak of to another; and here we find the nearness of God to us. So, whether you are threatened by coming danger, or tried by past or

present circumstances, seek to bring in the power of faith, let God be your counselor. The character of the enemies of God, is that of “children in whom is no faith.” May your refuge and strength be distinctly in God. This alone can sustain the soul. “If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have received the reconciliation.”

It is our privilege to know, not only that we have peace with God, but that He also watches over us, and leads us in the paths of service. May we be able to learn this as being under His hand. Would we desire to be brought into practical fellowship with Him in His ways, let us seek it by prayer and supplication.

Fathers, Young Men and Babes in Christ: A Word on Abiding in Him

There is especial power in this epistle for the strengthening and establishment of our souls, as also for security against haughty assumption. The Word has provided for all our need. The mere doctrine of salvation will not do. "Already," says the apostle, "are there many antichrists." "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;).... This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him..." (Chapter 1:1-7).

God reveals Himself. Man is apt to fancy he gets up to God, and finding such knowledge too high for him, he loses himself in the light, he knows not where. The Holy Ghost brings us here to that which might be "heard" and "seen" "and looked upon," and "handled" of the Word of life. When saying, "Hereby perceive we the love of God," it is added, "because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (Chapter 3:6) Again: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (Chapter 4:9-16) The soul is brought from the mysterious apprehension of man's thoughts about "the Deity" and "dwelling in God" to the propitiation; thus connecting the highest flights (so that no seducer could pretend to lead higher), all this elevation of doctrine about our dwelling in God and God in us, with the simple, precious truth, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," and with the plainest and most simple walk of the saint in brotherly love and practical godliness. The Word speaks of his dwelling in God and God in him, and then comes back to the plainest doctrine for simple Christians, "He is the propitiation for our sins." Here the most advanced and the most simple meet together; nay, the most advanced will be the most simple, and will constantly turn back to the blood. He who is taught of God is taught to humble himself; his soul never loses the sense of his nothingness. The mystic may exalt himself; but the man brought by Christ to God is necessarily humble.

It is "God manifest in the flesh," not God mystical. Thus the soul is guarded from error and seduction. We are told not merely of life, but of life manifested. We get fellowship with the Father,

but it is through Christ. There is the plainest moral evidence, such as cannot be escaped from by any, where life is; if it is not Christ, it is darkness; if it is Christ, it must be judged by Christ as He was down here. These things are written that our joy may be full. I cannot have more; I have eternal life, I have joy, I have light, and all this in Christ; I may know more about it (that is another thing), but if my knowledge brings me anything more than the Father and the Son, it is error.

But then the life of Christ shines out. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk, even as He walked.... Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth (the veil is rent, and we are to abide in the light). He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now..." Talk not of attainments, brethren, and not of love; it is a mistake, where love is not, Christ is not; all His walk was love.

In verse 12 the apostle gets into detail. "I write unto you," he says, "children" (little children, as it is in our translation. I omit the word because we have to distinguish between this and the "little children" addressed, verses 13, 18, in contrast with fathers and young men. This is addressed to the whole of those to whom the apostles is writing, as also are verses 1, 28; he includes all), "because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake."

The "fathers" (the name designates the greatest maturity in grace) are addressed specifically (vs. 13); but he has not anything more to say to them than, "Ye have known Him that is from the beginning." And this is no passing thought; for, when he repeats his address (vs. 14), he can say nothing higher. Let who will come and tell you wonderful things, you cannot get beyond or higher than this, you know Him that is from the beginning. It is instructive to mark the silence of the Holy Spirit as to adjectives. When speaking of Jesus, He does not add an epithet. That name is enough; it carries with it a power which keeps the mind in reverence in the presence of God. We cannot get out an expression of our feelings there, though we may and do among brethren; we can add nothing to that name; God knows all it conveys; His eye surveys all its loveliness, and alone can span its vastness. And mark, it is not said, You know all doctrine, (important as it is, that we should be clear as to doctrine); but You have known Him. We cannot have a truth really in faith, except as it is connected with Christ. He is the one object of the saint's faith.

The "young men" have "overcome the wicked one." Here there is energy of faith. It is impossible to be in any energy, that is of the Spirit, and not be brought into conflict with Satan; and, if there is this energy, there will also be the overcoming. But this supposes the death of the flesh. There is a vast deal of energy without the subduing of self, and all that is not energy with Satan. It is there we fail, and let Satan in. There is a certain turning point with the soul, when it has come to a knowledge of itself—that there is not anything good in the flesh, that not anything of self can overcome evil, that by strength shall no man prevail, we learn to say, "When I am weak, then I am strong." When the soul has learned to distrust self, there is no haste in what it does; it has to do with God. One true-hearted Christian will see evil, and seek to remedy or overcome it with all vigor and energy, while another, more deeply taught of God, takes the trouble to humble himself, and goes to God about it, before he begins to work against it. God will accomplish all His will, and the true-hearted saint, going to work in a good deal of his own energy, is sometimes blessed in his work, and afterward gets humbled, it may be with chastening, and blessed in separating between the flesh and the Spirit.

The “little children” have their sins forgiven them, and they “have known the father.” The babes in Christ are looked at with the fathers and young men as sharing in this. It is wonderful to see how grace knits together the old and the young Christian; the old takes to the young, his heart yearns over the little one with the utmost parental anxiety. “Ye need not that any man teach you,” the apostle says (vs. 27), yet is he teaching them the while as though all depended on it. And so will it always be. Where there is much grace, it is shown in the strong honoring the weak. The most instructed saint, instead of despising the weak, will cherish and teach them, and own their blessed portion. Look at Paul’s anxiety about the saints in Thessalonica. “Wherefore,” he tells them, “when we could no longer forbear, (having been hindered himself going,) we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus...”

In addressing the different states a second time, the “fathers” and “young men” are written to (vss. 14-17), and the “little children” (vs. 18); and then (vs. 28) resuming the general thread of the subject, he takes up the whole, and says to them, “Abide in Him.”

John’s heart rested in this—I know Christ. He knew the ways of Jesus, he had seen Him with his eyes. We, dear brethren, have not thus seen Christ; but we shall be able to say, “I know Him,” when walking with Him. If Christ were here, what would be His thoughts? Would not His heart be yearning over those who are living in the visible world, instead of the invisible? In a little while not a trace will be left of that which now occupies their time and thoughts. Is not half the time even of Christians occupied with things of no value? What will be the effect of abiding in Him? We shall be living as He lived, walking as He walked, manifesting the life of Christ amidst earthly things. But I must have the vessel broken down, for Christ to come out—self set aside; or I may be killing the high priest’s servant in my zeal. It is by bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus is made manifest in our mortal body. If “young men,” that is, if there is energy in the Spirit, beware of the opposite energy. The address to young men in the second place (vs. 15), is not about knowing the Father, nor yet simply about overcoming; if there is the overcoming of Satan, and the denying of the flesh, there must be also the resisting the things which Satan presents to set the flesh a-going; “Love not the world,” he writes, “neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world...” The Lord Jesus says to the Father (John 17), “O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee...” So here the Apostle sets in contrast before them the world and all that is in it, and the Father. The love of the world is kept out of the heart by the love of the Father; the love of the world is a large word. But it is not merely that the thing is condemned; as Christians our life is not from that source, nor can it have fellowship with its spirit. In our everyday circumstances, are not the affections distracted from things not seen by the things that are seen? That which is in question here, is not the working with our hands the things which are good, God can bless and preserve the soul in that; but the eye affects the heart, and what mean the varied forms of attraction for the senses on every hand are they not just so many things to draw away the heart from the Father? “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

“It is the last time” (vs. 18)—solemn, precious word And yet it seems strange comfort, when the world is bad, to be told “that it will be worse.” Paul writes: “The mystery of iniquity doth already work” (2 Thess. 2:9). Good and evil are going on together; God carrying on His own work, spite of all opposition. Is it not wonderful to see evil apparently getting the upper hand, and God not

interfering to prevent it? Only interfering in grace to draw men out of the world; and even they keep not their first love. What a picture do those constantly present who were gathered in true love to Jesus, in the course of five or six years! It is rare to find the same love. And thus it was even in Paul's time; he clings to Timothy as to a plank in a wreck. (Phil. 2:19,22) How it makes the heart sink to see all seeking their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's. But John says, "It is the last time; for now is the time of antichrists." This word comes in like dew from heaven. It is the last time! Jesus is soon coming! The heart pants for the morning without clouds! One looks with astonishment at the patience of God's grace! This sustains in conflict; and the heart pants, not to cease from service, but after God; not to rest from conflict, but for the resurrection morn. Thus God has turned the difficulties of the time into blessing. Satan may seek to hurt us, to mar the work of God; but he cannot master Him who has met all evil, and overcome it in the head of evil, who hath gotten Himself the victory.

"Ye have an unction from the Holy One" (not from the wise One or from the God of knowledge) to keep you. The enemies may be subtle, but the Spirit who dwells in you draws you to "continue in the Son and in the Father." Of course, it is assumed that we have Christ. (vs. 28)

"Now, that ye may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming, abide in Him."

Faith, Not Discussion: A Word on Knowing

JOHN 7

Of the three great feasts of the Jews (Deut. 16:16), in which year by year all the males had to go up to Jerusalem, two have had their antitypes; the third has not.

The feast of tabernacles was celebrated after the harvest and the vintage. In it the children of Israel dwelt in booths, in witness that, once strangers, they were strangers no longer. But then there was in connection with this feast an eighth day, showing that along with the accomplishment of God's purposes in respect to the earth, there would be the introduction of a new period, the commencement of a new week.

Jesus was in Galilee. (vs. 1) "Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world." They wanted Him to give a manifestation of Himself adequate to His claims. This was not the time for Christ to show Himself to the world. He will do so; "every eye shall see Him;" His glory shall be exhibited to the terror of the ungodly. But He is not showing Himself now to the world; and this, to a world lying in wickedness, is mercy-real long-suffering. (2 Peter 3:9) His brethren had no understanding of this; "for neither did His brethren believe on Him."

Mark His answer: "My time is not yet come; but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for My time is not yet full come." When He is manifested in power, it will not be a question of testimony merely against evil, He will say, "Those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay before Me." (Luke 19:27) He takes no such place of vindicating Himself now. Cost what it will, we are to accomplish the will of God while evil is in power; there is no bringing in of power to hinder the evil. (Mark 9:13; Rev. 3:10)

Having said this, "He abode still in Galilee," He had gone there on His first rejection; and, though we find Him going up to Jerusalem to keep the feasts, He abode there. "The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." (Matt. 4:15,16) For judgment was He come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind. "Ye say ye see," He told the Pharisees, "therefore your sin remaineth." He was "Jesus of Galilee." The poor despised Galileans had the light when the Jews had not.

His brethren having gone up, He also goes up (vs. 10), "not openly, but as it were in secret."

And now we find what is going on in hearts. There is much murmuring among the people concerning Him: some say, He is a good man others, Nay; but He deceiveth the people.' The Lord

might bring blessing out of it, but they are reasoning and discussing, and this is just the proof that they have nothing to say to it as yet. In another place He asks His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" They tell Him, "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, one of the prophets." It was all discussion. But when Peter replies (to the question, "But whom say ye that I am?"), "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," He tells him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." There was personal recognition of Himself, and where there is that, there is no discussion. Discussing Him as subject-matter in their own minds, they had not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. Where people's minds are at work discussing the right and the wrong, there is not the mind of the newborn babe; they are not receiving, but judging. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" asked Nathanael (Nazareth was a despised city, and he thought no good thing could come out of it); but when that which was blessed was presented to Him, the Israelite without guile received it.

Further, we get instruction here (vss. 14-17) as to receiving the doctrine of God. About the middle of the feast Jesus goes up into the temple and teaches. The Jews marvel, saying, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" He tells them, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." They thought He had received it from man, therefore He says, it is not Mine. No matter what we have learned, if we have not learned it from God, it is nothing; there is no faith; if learned from man, it is mine. Then He adds, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." Where there is faith, there is the unfeigned desire to do the will of God. Observe, He says, 'If any man will (that is, wills to) do,' not, 'If he have done.' If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; God will show what His will is. If it be not, what is the good (speaking with reverence) of knowing His will? there is not the intention of doing it. Where the heart is right in the sight of God, He gives the capacity for knowing His will. The heart ought to be, in a certain sense, wary; there is a Christian simplicity, and there is a simplicity not Christian; but there may be this wariness, and yet sincerity of desire to do God's will when known. This is ever the practical test of Christian truthfulness. There may be great ignorance and infirmity, but if the eye be single, if there be the real intention in the heart of doing God's will, he shall know.... Very often we do not get light, because we are not prepared to walk in the light when known.

He next refers to proofs; for there are certain moral proofs quite evident to hearts opened by grace. Never in a single thing sought He His own glory.

Then He turns to them about what they have known. "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law?" The desire to do the will of God, if known, is not merely in question, there is not the doing His will in things known. He turns, so to speak, the tables upon themselves. You are speaking of my being unlettered, and you are walking in sin; "Why go ye about to kill Me?" There will always be hatred in the heart to the truth, where there is not the will to go along with it. As bad a thing as can happen to a man, is for him to be contented. without it; when we find him saying, 'I am happy now, I was exercised about it once, but I am happy now.'

Verses 25-27, there is again discussion. "Is not this He, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, He speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" [What is the meaning of this? He is teaching publicly, and no man owns Him; have any of

the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?] Here is their great motive, not God's truth—"Howbeit we know this man whence He is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is." Nor did they.

The Lord turns now. "Ye both know Me," He cries, "and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not. But I know Him: for I am from Him, and He hath sent Me." (vss. 28, 29)

This disturbs conscience. They seek to take Him. Their only thought is to get rid of the testimony that is troubling them. But no man lays hands on Him, because His hour is not yet come. Meanwhile many of the people believe on Him, and say, "When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than those which this man doeth?"

Then there comes out a further great truth. The Pharisees and chief priests, enraged at hearing of the effect produced on the people, having sent officers to take Him, He tells the people, It is no good getting into a carnal discussion; while you have the light, walk in the light, lest darkness come upon you; you are seeking me now in ill-will, in enmity, in malice. "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent Me." I am going to My Father, and ye shall see Me no more, ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me; you may seek Me now, and find Me; but the day will soon be when I go unto Him that sent Me; I came from God, and I am going to God; where I am, thither ye cannot come. There could not be a more terrible judgment, spoken in all calmness as it was.

Then said the Jews among themselves, "Whither will He go, that we shall not find Him? will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that He said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come?" Not a thought of God! they can think about the Gentiles, but not about God or His Christ.

But as the converse of this result of unbelief, we get Jesus in "the last day, that great day of the feast," standing and crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said (what not as in chap. 4, "whoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." He speaks of another consequence of His going away, of what should take place while He was away, of the power of identification with the eighth day; it is not that the thirsty one shall be satisfied, that, if he comes to Him and drinks, his thirst shall be quenched, but) out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (vss. 37-39) The Holy Ghost should be received in such sort by the believer as to dwell in and flow from him. Israel drank in the wilderness of that spiritual rock that followed them. There was a river to drink from, at which their thirst was quenched. In anticipation of the feast of tabernacles we have the Holy Ghost to give us the joy, the power, the glory and fullness of this communion with God. (Eph. 1:14)

Now the Holy Ghost never flowed in this way in an Old Testament prophet, nor yet even in John the Baptist. He worked on a person's mind and gave prophecies; but when the prophets searched, what did they discern? "That not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." (1 Peter 1:10-12) If Paul speaks, he speaks of that which he has; he speaks of future things indeed, but he speaks of things that belong to himself. See what is said

Romans 8:26,27. The Holy Ghost come down from Christ the head of the body, takes His place in the body, and brings down the love of God into the detail and circumstances of the Christian life, into the sorrows of the way, whilst, as come down from Christ glorified, He identifies the members with Him in all the coming blessing and glory.

And mark another thing. The Lord is not here speaking of the quickening power of the Spirit (a most blessed truth in its place), but of that which they that believe on Him should receive, as it is expressed in Ephesians, "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." That is our position.

But whilst it is so blessed, where does it cast all the people who have not believed? Back again into discussion. Many of the people, when they hear this, say, "Of a truth, this is the Prophet." Others say, "This is the Christ." But some, "Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David dwelt?"

"There was a division among the people because of Him." (vs. 43) Whilst Christ is to the believer the source of living waters, unbelief is discussing about Him.

"Every man went unto His own home; Jesus went unto the mount of Olives."

Creation As a Type

The book of Genesis naturally divides into eight parts—seven biographies, and an introductory account of creation. The biographies are those of Adam, Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. Each has a spiritual import of its own, and though I forbear to enter on it here, I may say briefly, that I believe the whole to be typical of God's work in a ruined world—His various steps of progress up to the "restitution of all things," whether in man individually, or generally in the world at large.

Of these applications, the fuller (so far as I see at present) is the first; but the second very constantly underlies it, perhaps everywhere to more discerning eyes. In the history of creation itself it is not hard to trace each of them throughout, though as the picture grows brighter and more blessed, it necessarily becomes fainter, alas! to eyes so little able to bear brightness.

It is to this part of Genesis—the introduction to the whole book—that I would turn for a little, looking at it briefly in both ways. First, as having application to the inner work of God in man individually; and second, as telling of the same work in the more extended field of the world at large.

And first, the individual application.

It was a fallen world—how fallen we know not—that needed to be renewed. The first verse of Genesis I take assuredly to be the statement of original creation; the second to speak of a state into which it had now lapsed: "And the earth was" (or, perhaps, had become) "without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Who can doubt how striking a figure of man's natural state? Fallen, too, shapeless and orderless, "subject to vanity," his heart, like the restless waves of the sea, tossing under darkness. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast forth mire and dirt."

It is not from himself that a change comes. We are not born of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Here is the only help. Without our own will we are born into the world of nature, and without our own we are newborn. Our parentage (blessed be His name!) is of God, and thus we can call Him Father. So I find in this inspired record God Himself at work. Not laws, but a person. "God created," "God formed," "God made." Nay, the agent and the instrument are both particularly pointed out. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said." That is, we have the Spirit and the Word of God. And so are we said to be born of each: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

The Spirit is mentioned first, then God speaks, and "the entrance of His Word giveth light." Not that the darkness is at once removed. It is bounded, yet returns again, but not in its first density. And the order is, I doubt not, significant of progress: first evening, and then morning. And after the seventh day evening no more mentioned; as in the full day of eternity, when the sun goes no more down, and the night is fled forever.

Meanwhile, though the sun be not yet, the light is good. God calls it so, while as yet it shines on nothing but a waste of waters. Only evil seems brought out by it. There is no change, or so it might seem, in the creature. It might seem that darkness were a fitter covering for the hopeless ruin in which it lies.

So, too, with the first light upon the soul. When the living Word has penetrated the heart, even to the dividing asunder of joints and marrow, of soul and spirit, and we find ourselves detected and exposed in the presence of One before whom all things are naked and opened, yet the light is good even then. "Grace and truth" come hand in hand together. The utter evil is only the dark background for the display of the infinite good; and where sin hath abounded, grace does much more abound.

The second day sees heaven formed. In the wisdom and through the operation of God—at His word still, not otherwise—out of all the barrenness and confusion below, the felt evil and ruin of the creature, thoughts and aspirations rise, drawn up as vapors from the sea; to one that can understand, foretoking fertility, though now for a time we lie under their shadows. So out of a world ruined by sin, and darkened with misery, the mercy and love of God have drawn up our hearts heavenward. Hopes and desires, called forth by His word, reach up without presumption thither; and the soul finds its government, as we may say, in the power of heavenly things. This is a step onwards still, yet leaving room surely for much more. I do not find God saying here of the waters, as He had done of the light, that "they are good." He says no such thing of this day's work at all. And the silence is surely expressive. Right it is, in a sense, of course, when the soul, before resurrection known, looks up to heaven. Yet is it self or God that is uppermost in the heart? When the cry is pressed out of the soul, "What shall I do to be saved?" it were worse than folly to say that He who has wrought this in us does not rejoice in it. Yet of necessity what occupies us then, rightly enough, is self. It is my need, my salvation. All well as a transition to better things. Yet He who seeks us as children, not as servants, cannot be contented with this, which yet bears witness of His own work wrought within.

The third day is resurrection-day, and the earth rises out of the waters; for the power of resurrection known, gives to the soul stability and fruitfulness. As with the darkness before, so the waters now get their bound from God—a bound which they cannot pass, nor "turn again to cover the earth." So with all that causes the disquiet and barrenness of the soul. The flesh is not removed, but bounded. It gets its limit and its name. And out of the firm ground of the risen man, fruit is produced, though still, and ever, at God's bidding only; for the new nature is not independent, but rather most truly dependent upon Him in all things.

God speaks twice this day. It is a great day for making His power known. And the fruit comes forth at His bidding—from the grass to the fruit-tree, from the more perishable to the more profitable and enduring—and withal, bearing within itself the seed of more. Real fruit is thus reproducing. Glorify God in your life, and you shall not glorify Him alone. Sing joyfully unto Him, and the most desert place shall find an echo. Blessed be His grace who worketh it all Himself, whatever it be—all and in all.

Notice how upon this resurrection-day earth and waters, the spirit and the flesh, get their distinctive names. Not merely as quickened, but as risen men, we understand both the thorough hopelessness of the evil, and recognize distinctively that which is of God. So the New Testament

writers—resurrection men—speak plainly of death and life, the old nature and the new—things dimly seen before.

Above all, there is freedom. It is not “captivity to the law of sin” anymore. Conflict there may be, but the sea within has got its bound from God, and though the waves thereof roar and swell, the earth has risen up above the waterfloods: they cannot return to cover it anymore. By-and-by a time shall come, when, with the darkness, the sea, too, shall be gone forever. “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

And now, resurrection known, not only quickened but risen men, there yet wait us another and a higher experience. The fourth day presents us, not with an earthly but a heavenly scene. Sun, and moon, and stars shine on us. Earth is blessed indeed, lit up with this brightness, but it is beneath our feet—far away.

It is not very hard to read these symbols.

Christ rose from the dead, not to tarry here, but ascended up to the right hand of the Father. And we, too, who believe in Him, are not merely risen, but heavenly men. “As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” Scripture itself leads us fully and distinctly to the interpretation of these two great lights, when it speaks of “the Sun of Righteousness” which “shines upon the world,” and where our Lord speaks of His disciples as “the light of the world,” in the meantime, during “the night” of His absence.

Very different, though both “light-bearers,” is the light of each. His, ever full-orbed, self-derived, unchanging. The church, clothed but with His glory—comeliness put upon her—glory which she reflects, too, but partially; always changing, often eclipsed. In a time coming, there shall be (what has not yet been) sun and moon in the firmament together; and the “sun shall no more go down, neither shall the moon withdraw herself.” There shall be no more change, no failure in manifestation of Him, when He, who is our life, shall appear, and “we shall appear with Him in glory.”

Then let us note how, and special emphasis is laid upon it, “God set them in the firmament of heaven, to give light upon the earth.” A risen and ascended Christ it is, who shall as the “Sun of Righteousness arise upon the earth with healing in His wings.” And as for the church, is it not invariably true, that the higher her course in heaven the more her light shines? She is heavenly indeed, perforce; for God has set her there; but, alas! near enough, often, down, to be sadly dimmed with the shadows and mists of earth.

And “He made the stars also.” These are not forgotten, though they do not make the principal figure here. So shine far out of the depths of heaven into which they are gone, the lights of other days. From Abel to him whose voice in the wilderness in vain called Israel to repentance, God made them all, and forgets them not. “He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names.” Nor in vain does their light shine on us, witnesses to the glory of their Maker.

Thus on this fourth day we are made familiar with heaven. We cross with Israel over Jordan, and our Canaan, our land of rest, lies before us. Happiest he who most heeds here the assurance which God gives to us as once to them: “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon,

that have I given you, from the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun." For us the shadows of a more blessed reality, a fairer prospect, and brighter shores.

Strange it may seem, that after all this blessedness we get back, not even to earth, but to "the waters." We come down from the mount of glory to find still what nature shrinks from, and how evil nature is. But we come down to find God at work amid it all, and by the power of His hand a higher form of life than ever yet born out of the midst of that which hitherto was never aught but barren.

So in the fifth day stage, after glory is known, or begins to be, and the hope of our calling, we come to find the tossing sea again, the world in its true character of unquiet evil-waters, waters everywhere. Seen after the brightness of sun and moon, painful it is and wearisome indeed, but profitable too. Our souls need the contrast, need the discipline of it; for all is discipline, and it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. With what loathing we learn to turn from self, with what yearning to God, as we pass through this scene of sin and sorrow, and feel the buffeting of its waves. How tribulation, temptation, persecution, which are but waves in the sea of universal evil, yet work appointed ends of separation; that is, sanctification—holiness. And how thus forms of higher life spring out of them, while "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."

Nor is it without use to notice the difference between the resurrection fruits of the third day, and what we may rather call the ascension fruits of the fifth and sixth. For the fruits here are ascension fruits. The waters produced none such till the fourth day glories had come. And all disquiet, evil, sorrow known, can never work in us fruitfulness such as this, until we have learned something of what this fourth day gives. Then, indeed, there is fruitfulness; not merely righteousness, joy, or peace, but the development of living affections in intercourse with the unseen and eternal. But to this the waters too contribute. God knows how little of heaven might be known by us, were it not for the shaking of things of time and sense. Thus while our outward man perishes, "our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

On the sixth day the earth produces. A blessed time of which we know but little, when the new life develops itself without hindrance, and without need of discipline; when we are beyond the troubled waters, in the quiet haven where we would be; when man is found fully in "the image of God" that created him, "in righteousness and holiness of truth." Then the kingdom is His indeed, and over everything that His hands have made God can rejoice; for, behold, it is very good.

Then in a sweet and blessed sense He can have rest, of whom He that declared Him said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He has brought that work marvelously to completion, and by grace, for us even as for Him, there is only now a neverending rest—Himself the First and the Last, seen, enjoyed, and glorified in it—the Sabbath of eternity.

Of all this latter part, a few brief words sums up my present knowledge. But we have yet to trace the application of these wonders in the field of the world at large. And I am sure it will confirm the accuracy of the separate interpretations to observe how closely and intimately they are connected

together, how truly the one underlies the other.

Here again the fact of the fall is what we necessarily start with, and it needs no argument to show that the world in its general features corresponds with those of the individual. “As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.” The agents in recovery also are the same. There is no power for it in the creature; God Himself must act. And here too, I doubt not, that each day marks some special stage in the development of His plans and process of restoration.

Upon the face of revelation it is not very hard to discover at least so many epochs of special interpositions of the Divine Worker as answer to these creative days. Thus we have (1) The antediluvian period, opened with the promise of the woman’s seed; (2) Human government set up in Noah; (3) The call of Abraham, and in him of an elect family, out of all the families of the earth; (4) The church period; (5) The time of trouble after the church is taken up; (6) The millennial kingdom; (7) The eternal rest. These are all not only strictly defined periods, with each a special character of its own, but they are really stages of progress, the effects of which remain. Some that we might think at first sight strangely omitted in this enumeration have not in reality this character of permanent steps of progress at all. Thus the law, needful as it undoubtedly was, was in some important respects rather retrogression than progress. The apostle’s own account of it is, that “it came in by the way” (παρειοηλθε); that “it was added because of transgression, till the seed should come.” So it is not represented here. The transfer of dominion to the Gentiles could still less, though for a like reason, come in. We have then just these seven periods left—six formative, and the seventh the final rest, the “sabbatism” that remains to the people of God.

When we come to the application, we find it in the main as simple as possible. That the first day answers to the antediluvian period is plain. Its light before the sun is the promise before Christ. Yet the world lay unchanged—a sea of disordered lusts and passions; and God, while acting in grace on individuals, did not publicly interfere with it. This lasted till the flood.

The second day may seem less easy to identify with the establishment of human government in Noah. Yet if the waters symbolize, as I doubt not, man in his instability of changing evil, then the separation of the waters from the waters does surely point to that establishment of human power, which in Noah himself might only make its weakness more discernible, and in Nimrod become, on the other hand, tyranny; but which yet Paul could speak of as the ordinance of God and ministering good. It is confirmation of this, that the word heavens contains in the original, as I have before noticed, the thought of “arrangement” —government. These heavens are not the sphere in which the sun and moon move on the fourth day. Yet, I doubt not, all that is blessed herein will be more than reproduced; yea, gloriously perfected and established when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

The third day comes, and again there is separation; but of a different kind. The earth is divided from the waters. Now here again, if the waters signify the restless passions of man’s self-will left to their natural course, it is plain we have the figure in them of Gentile nations. Scripture moreover abundantly establishes this view, as in Revelation 17:15— “The waters which thou sawest...are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues;” and again, where our Lord, typifying the temporary giving up of Israel, goes out of the house, and sits by the seaside.

This period begins, then, with the call of Abraham, and Himself. In the earth, separated from the waters, I see the Lord's taking out of the nations a special people for Israel taken up of God to be cultivated (if I may so say) for Himself. It may, alas! be ground which produces thorns and thistles; but that is not in the line of thought here, nor failure at all (save so far as day and night succeed each other in constant cycles till the seventh day). But in this ground grow, too, the goodly trees of the Lord's planting; not barren nor unfruitful under His abiding care.

But all, so far, is earth. The next day carries us up to heaven. The symbols here have been already before us, and I need not dwell on them again. I surely believe we have here the present period—earth not taken up at all, though the scene of testimony, and God thereby taking out of it a people for His name; but a people who are thus “taken out,” heavenly, the body of Him who, Himself in heaven, is made there “Head over all things to the church,” “seated together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.”

The fifth day, in contrast to all this, brings us back, as one might think, to confusion such as in the beginning. We find nothing but “waters”—a mass of Gentile evil; Israel for the time given up and mingled in the mass in what might seem hopeless confusion. It is the “time of Jacob's trouble,” the time of the “lawless one,” who shall “do after his own will;” when the nations “shall be gathered together unto the great day of God Almighty,” and shall end their career of folly and impiety in open war against the Lamb.”

Yet amid all this we know, just as in the type we see the waters made productive, God shall have a people for Himself. Revelation 7 witnesses to this, both as regards Israel and the Gentiles also; as Matthew 25 shows us, as to the latter, their separation from the mass of the ungodly when the Lord is come.

Then on the sixth day we have the figure of the kingdom. Earth produces, as it is written of restored Israel, that they “shall bud and blossom, and fill the face of the earth with fruit.” Man, in the image of God—and Christ is “the image of the invisible God”—reigns with his bride over a ransomed earth. The figures are so plain as to preclude all doubt as to interpretation.

Finally a “sabbath” comes—a full and final rest. This cannot be till all things are subdued into Christ; nor can He rest until He hath “delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.” Short of this He could not rest, even on earth directing His disciples' thoughts and desires to that: “Our Father,... Thy kingdom come.” And so when the time shall be fully arrived for the accomplishment, “when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also,” as man, “be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.” So it is emphatically in the type here. It is God's work finished, God's rest come; true blessing for the creature when God occupies the scene altogether; evil shut out forever; the whole state “sanctified and blessed.”

Thus this precious word unfolds itself, and the Maker of the world is seen indeed as the Redeemer too. There are yet a few thoughts more which I offer more as suggestions than as fully matured.

The days of creation in their typical import evidently show a close connection with the seven lives which follow, and divide among themselves the remainder of the book. If you take the first and the last of these only, it is impossible not to be struck with the contrast. In Adam, fallen human nature; in Joseph, the Christ-like life, so perfect a type of the Second Man, the Lord from heaven. And if

we take the intervening lives we shall be no less clear that in their spiritual meaning they are in perfect and orderly progress between the former and the latter. The seven lives are, in short, the perfect picture of the believer from the time the light first breaks in upon the darkness of nature till he attains the image of the heavenly in the kingdom that cannot be moved.

Now this, it is plain, answers to what we find in the six creative days. Moreover the third day is, as it were, divided into two by the twice-spoken fiat of creation. Now, if we apply these to the seven lives we shall find that they correspond in a wonderful way with one another.

Thus we have in Adam the first day light bringing out the ruin, and speaking dimly of the remedy; in Abel, and those that follow in his line (for Seth is in the room of Abel, whom Cain slew), the strife between the old nature and the new, linking, more dimly it may be, with the second day; in Noah, the third of these lives, the third day resurrection, where we pass through the judgment of the flesh into a new world of peace and blessing; in Abraham, resurrection fruit, the pilgrim's life on earth; in Isaac, the peaceful consciousness of sonship, as Galatians 4, where "the child of the free-woman" becomes our type; in Jacob's life of discipline, that which answers so remarkably to the lesson of the fifth day; finally, in Joseph, the highest stage is reached in one who stands before us as pre-eminently a type of Christ Himself, where the path of suffering leads up to the kingdom.

I have done. May the God of all grace only be pleased to bless us with a spirit of more humble, holy reverence for His blessed Word, that truth, even in fragments, may be gathered up as too precious to be lost. And may we be sanctified by it.

F. W. G.

The above is the development of thoughts which appeared in a paper in the thirteenth volume of the Present Testimony, entitled "The Typical Character of Genesis 1, 2:3."—F. W. G.

I, Not I

The apostles are the doctrinal foundation of the church. We are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.”

Whilst, in the mercy of God, the apostles were inspired to teach with authority the doctrines connected with and flowing from the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, they present themselves to us as disciples in the school of Christ, learning under Him, as their Master, the value and preciousness of those doctrines, to the instruction of their own souls. This gives a peculiar character to apostolic teaching. It is not like a master occupied in the laborious task of teaching a pupil certain rudiments in which he takes no interest himself, but as one finding an increasingly absorbing interest in that which he teaches others. Thus the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Philippians, says, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.” It was safe for them that the apostle should teach them “line upon line, line upon line;” but this was not irksome to him; his one subject was the Lord, and joy and confidence in Him He was, therefore, writing from a heart filled with that in which he desired others to participate.

There are occasions in which the Apostle Paul turns from a general statement to his own individual apprehension or experience of the doctrine he is propounding. Of this we have one very notable instance in the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans. In that chapter he is discussing the question of law-taking up under one view the previous passing notices of “law,” and proving that which he had asserted. In Romans 3 he had asserted, “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” How amply is this proved in Romans 7, “I had not known sin but by the law.” Again, in Romans 3, “Do we then make void the law through faith I God forbid; yea, we establish the law.” But how it is established we learn not till Romans 7, when the weighty conclusion, “The law is holy,” is brought out against all man’s, reasonings to shift responsibility from himself, and to cast blame on the law. In Romans 6:14 we have the statement, “Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” How fully is it demonstrated in Romans 7, that one quickened by the Spirit, if he knew not redemption, and were set under law, would yet be under the dominion of sin.

But how does the apostle conduct these demonstrations? This is the interesting point. He is not only the demonstrator, but the subject of the demonstration; not only the teacher, but the scholar; not only the asserter of a broad, general principle, but, in his own person, the exhibition of the power of that principle. The change from “we” to “I,” in this part of his writing—from truth generally recognized, to that very truth known in power in the individual conscience—is very noticeable. It is a great thing to bow the mind to the authoritative declarations of the Word of God; but when that same Word, as “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,” enters into the conscience, and demonstrates itself as the Word of God by laying us naked and bare before Him with whom we have to do; then do we justify God in His sayings, and clear Him when He is judged. God has been pleased to teach us what law necessarily is when applied to man in his actual

condition (either as “in the flesh” or as quickened by the Spirit), by allowing one under the most favorable circumstances so to experimentalize on himself as to be able to hold up himself as an illustrious proof of the doctrine he teaches others. Saul, the persecuting Pharisee, by the aboundings of the grace of God over his sin, becomes Paul, the minister of the gospel of the grace of God, and the expounder of law as the strength of sin. Under the law himself, and knowing redemption through the CROSS of Christ as his deliverance from under the power of a most grievous and galling yoke, he could sympathize with those who were still groaning under the same yoke. Them that were under the law he approached, as full well knowing what it was to be under the law; and that too in a much deeper sort, by his deliverance from it, than when he was actually under it.

There is a brief but interesting period noticed in, the Acts, in which, it can hardly be doubted, Saul the Pharisee went through a deep and searching process. “He was three days without sight; and neither did eat nor drink.” A brief period; but if the Lord be the teacher; if He is taking in hand a man, even as a wild ass’s colt to tame and break in; if He is showing that there must be an entire surrender unto Himself, and that every effort at self-justification is a fresh kick against the pricks, and only adds to our own misery, what depth of truth may not be learned in so brief a period Saul was arrested by the glory of Jesus and by the voice which said to him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?” He asked, “Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

Saul was then in a singular state for three days—blind to all external objects, and secluded from society. He knew that the despised Jesus was the Lord of glory, and that he had persecuted Him; but as yet he knew not fully the grace of the Lord Jesus, and his own need of that perfect grace. The thought still pressed on him, “What wilt Thou have me to do?” How innate is this thought in man, the moment he begins to have to do with God. But this innate thought had, in Saul, been strengthened by his previous training under the law. Like those who were attracted to Jesus by His satisfying their hunger in the wilderness, he could understand labor on his part, but not GIVING on the part of the Lord. (John 6:27,28) But now, Saul had to see light in the light of the Lord. The law itself would appear in a very different aspect, since the Lawgiver was revealed, from what it did before. Tenacious of the law, persecuting Jesus (in His disciples) in his zeal to maintain it, he had never really known what the law was. At the very time he was most self-satisfied as to his righteousness in the law, he really was “without the law.” But now, having seen the Lord, the law too comes in its proper light. “The commandment came; “ it flashed upon him in all its length and breadth: instead of having kept it, he now finds by it the knowledge of sin; and he “establishes” the law, in his own righteous condemnation. “I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”... “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” “What wilt Thou have me to do?” must be given up; no one can attain to the knowledge of righteousness in that way. By the law can only be the knowledge of sin.

At the end of the three days, through the ministry of His servant Ananias, the Lord, even Jesus, removed the scales from his eyes, and filled him with the Holy Ghost, and gave him another sight, even to see that same Jesus whose glory had overwhelmed him, in all the fullness of His grace, and as being Himself to him the righteousness of God—a righteousness far higher than that he

had hoped to attain by the law. (See Phil. 3:9)

But did this knowledge of righteousness put the law in a more favorable light or did it only tend to make it known in a deeper power of condemnation, so that death to the law and deliverance from it, by the body of Christ, became an equally apparent necessity, as death to sin, by Christ's having borne his sins in His own body on the tree? What says Paul, with his eyes open, and filled with the Holy Ghost? "We" (namely, all quickened by the Spirit) "know that the law is spiritual;" it is intended to reach the thoughts and intents of the heart, and the spiritual acquiesce in the exposition of the Lawgiver Himself as to its exceeding breadth. (See Matt. 5)

The apostle, however, passes from "We" to "I." His new perception of the law gives him, at the same time, a new perception of himself. "The spiritual man judgeth all things," and to judge himself is one of the main offices of this power. And now, what is Saul the Pharisee as seen in this new light? "I am carnal, sold under sin." The application of the spiritual law to such a subject only tends to bring out his misery in the strongest relief. It is now something more than, "the commandment came." It is "the holy, just, and good commandment," making manifest "that sin dwelleth in me;" so that with my knowledge that the law is spiritual, if even now put under it, "sin would have dominion over me." See my honest struggle. It shows how I consent to the goodness of the law, how entirely I acquiesce in its demands. It is no less my happiness than my duty, to love God with all my heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and my neighbor as myself. But the moment that I, in earnestness of purpose, make the effort to fulfill this, I am made conscious of a counteracting force in me, too strong for me to contend with, and I am aroused to the consciousness that "sin dwelleth, in me." It is no accident, no habit, but an innate principle. I am forced therefore to separate myself from myself. "It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me." Such a discovery, made under honest struggle, is very different from the reception of the doctrine that sin dwelleth in us, and the use of this as an apology for sin. There is the difference between "we know" and "I know." The one is the knowledge of that which is true, the other the truth applied to the individual conscience by the Holy Ghost; and where He teaches, the truth is never handled lightly. "For I know," says the apostle, "that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." The Lord Himself had ruled that "the flesh profiteth nothing." Brought into closest contact with the Spirit, instead of being profited thereby, it only shows its contrariety and resistance. If, says the apostle, I not only consent unto the law in my judgment, but even delight in it after the inner man, it makes me acquainted with the depth of my misery, and forces me to cry out for deliverance. With the judgment convinced of the excellence of the law, and the affections engaged unto its goodness, and with an honest desire of getting the better of sin by the means of it, I find myself inexpressibly miserable, a slave to a tyrant that will not let me go, and from whom I cannot emancipate myself. It is true, I can say, "It is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me." But this does not satisfy. I want deliverance from myself, and am forced out of myself to find it in another, even in Christ Jesus. Redemption through His finished work alone meets my deeply-discovered necessity as a sinner; and I am forced out of the place of a doer, into the humble, yet happy, place of a receiver. "Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace."

If the question be raised, Must every one quickened by the Spirit go through this painful process? The answer is, that this is the necessary experience of honest legalism—even miserable bondage. But where deliverance is known, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the recognition of the doctrine, and experience of the fact, that "in my flesh good does not dwell," is even more deeply

learned than in the honest struggle against "sin that dwelleth, in me." The disciple of Christ learns to justify God, in His wisdom in the CROSS of Christ. He is made increasingly conscious, that nothing short of a complete redemption, in and by Jesus Christ, meets his case. Self, in his thought, becomes identified with sin; and he loathes self, rejoices in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh. Let the eye be turned from Christ to self, darkness and misery are the necessary results. We have no power against self, but by looking to Jesus. It is a deep, solemn, humbling truth, that the natural constitution of man is, that he is under "the law of sin and death," and that no effort of his can alter his constitution or extricate him from its misery; and more than this, that the good law of God, when honestly appealed to for help, only makes him sensible of the real misery of his condition. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" alone makes "free from the law of sin and death." I may analyze this constitution of man, and be thereby enabled to say, "Not I, but sin that dwelleth in me;" yet this is not deliverance, but misery. If I want deliverance, I must look to another source, even the grace of God in Christ Jesus. "I thank God through Jesus Christ."

But the apostle, the great teacher of the CROSS of Christ, he who determined to know nothing among the Corinthians but Jesus Christ and HIM CRUCIFIED, presents himself also as a disciple, deeply learned in that wondrous doctrine which he is so delighted to preach.

It is no uncommon thing for even believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to get under the law. The earliest inroad on the grace of the gospel, was the attempt of certain men from Judea to teach the brethren: "Except ye be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved." (See Acts 15) The Galatian converts had been fascinated by this doctrine, so taking and specious that, under some form or other, it has been found in all ages corrupting, as leaven, the pure doctrine of grace.

With the law, the apostle had done; every expectation from it had been cut off; he knew it as the ministration of death and condemnation, and the power of sin. He dared not build again the things he had destroyed, and constitute himself a transgressor, by asserting the law as in force over believers, when he had shown their deliverance from it, through faith in Christ Jesus. "For I," says the apostle, "through the law, am DEAD to the law, that I might live unto God;" an impossibility, if the law yet stood between him and God; but not only a possibility, but, as it were, a happy necessity, if, instead of the law, he saw Jesus to be the way to God, even Him who had "suffered the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." He then proceeds, as a scholar who had made great proficiency in the doctrine of the CROSS, and as a saved person who had learned it as "the power and wisdom of God:" "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet NOT I, but Christ liveth in me." Saul, the Pharisee and legalist, had come to his end, judicially, in the CROSS of Christ. All that Pharisaism and legalism had done, or could do for him, was to lead to condemnation. That condemnation had passed on Him on the CROSS. When Jehovah made His sword to awaken against "the Man my (His) fellow," it pierced Jesus, but it pierced Him as the sinner's Substitute. It was the act of God Himself, to "make Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

The anticipation of the CROSS cast a deep shade on the whole ministry of Jesus. He knew wherefore He had come. He knew what awaited Him, even that baptism which so straitened Him till it was accomplished. He knew the holiness of God, for He was Himself God. He knew the hatefulness of sin, as that which was most opposite to God. He knew the wrath of God, as it must needs meet sin. And with such perfect knowledge He recoiled, as it were, from the CROSS. A

martyr does not recoil from the stake; but in the stake there is no wrath of God, no hour of darkness, such as passed over Jesus when He lost the sunshine of God's presence; no desertion, such as Jesus felt when He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It was a divine impossibility that the cup He so dreaded should pass from Him. He bowed His head submissively, and drank it up. Now when the apostle says, "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST," he "arms himself with the same mind;" and not only acquiesces in what God had done in the CROSS, but acknowledges the divine impossibility of any other way of justification before God. God Himself must be the justifier; righteousness in any other way is an impossibility. Saul must be set aside. Christ must appear. It is a divine impossibility that flesh should glory in His presence. Paul, then, justifies God in the CROSS; he acquiesces in the divine necessity of setting him aside. Saul, the Pharisee and legalist, is dead and buried out of sight; bring in the law, and you revive him in all his sin and shame. We shrink from the CROSS, in this aspect; it bears hard upon us! But when we bow and take it up, what peace and calmness possess the soul! It is written, "Knowing this, that our old man is CRUCIFIED WITH Him" We receive the doctrine, and bow to its authority. But are we disciples? Can we take the place with Paul, and say, "I AM CRUCIFIED with Christ"? Has the necessity which drove us to the cross, because of there being no other way of escape, changed into admiration of the doctrine, so that we pursue it with intense interest, so that the more we learn, the deeper the doctrine appears? The CROSS of Christ is a wonderful school; the deepest intelligence of the renewed mind cannot sound its depths. But as we go on in this school, it is the truth which, at one and the same time, exercises our conscience and engages our affections. Well may another apostle call upon us to "gird up the loins of our mind," and intently and reverently study the sufferings of Christ, and the glories to follow—things which angels desire to look into.

Is then man, as he is in Adam, to be set aside? Are all his aspirations after greatness and wisdom, not only to be disappointed, but to end in his judgment? Such is the truth proclaimed by the CROSS; such is the lesson learned in the school of the CROSS. "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST." But is this bitter disappointment? Is there nothing to be expected from the flesh? Nothing. "The flesh profiteth nothing." "Forasmuch as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." But it is not bitter disappointment, though it cost many a struggle to acquiesce in the wisdom of God in passing sentence on the flesh in the CROSS of Christ, and many a hard struggle too, for ourselves practically to authenticate this sentence. To learn, under the teaching of the Spirit, to say, "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST," is the repose of the soul, and the spring of all true Christian energy. No one can say, "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST," without also saying, "Nevertheless I live." But is "the old man" again alive? Is Saul the Pharisee risen up from under the judgment of the CROSS, again to justify himself, again to seek righteousness by deeds of law, again to be in bondage to ordinances, or to live upon that which he himself can do? Not so; the old man is condemned and executed. It is not "I," the old man, "I," the Pharisee, "I," the legalist, "I," the moralist, "I," the religionist. It is "I, NOT I." "CHRIST liveth in me." It is strictly a new life, not drawn from Adam or any earthly source, but from Christ risen; a life heavenly in its source and in its aspirations—such a life as the highest human aspirations cannot even "conceive." The higher those aspirations rise, they only the more distinctly show the immense gap, impossible for man to traverse, between man of the highest order in Adam, and "Christ liveth in me." Is Jesus risen and at the right hand of God, and equally above man in whatever rank, condition, or pretensions, on earth? So is this wonderful

being, who thus describes his being, "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST, nevertheless I LIVE; yet NOT I, but CHRIST LIVETH IN ME," equally above every other being; and by reason of this, his essential dignity, he can afford to take the lowest place here. This "honor cometh from God only."

"I, NOT I." If "Christ liveth in me," then this life has its object, its food, its pursuits; it cannot be satisfied with that with which the old man sought to be satisfied; it can neither be nourished by its own works, nor by ordinances. It must have an object, and food, and pursuits congenial to it. All these are found in Christ. "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." The life now lived is not in its native climate; nothing around it really ministers unto it. It is a life pre-eminently "of faith." That same Jesus, the Son of the living God, who in heaven will be the one absorbing object, is the one absorbing object to faith now. Would any be kept from the bondage of legalism, it must be by looking unto Jesus. It is not a speculative life; on the contrary, it is a life full of affection; for its object is Jesus, as the disciple (rather than the apostle) adds, "who loved me, and gave Himself for me." The affection of Jesus to us draws forth ours to Him. The love of Jesus, when He was here, found its activities amidst all the miseries of this world; and if His love produces the like in us, he who is most living by the faith of the Son of God, will be most active in the midst of the misery of this world, because, as the disciple of the CROSS of Christ, he has learned that nothing short of divine love can meet its miseries.

If the apostle, enabled deeply to analyze the workings of law on one quickened by the Spirit—to know it as the strength of sin, could account for the deep inward struggle by this principle, "I, NOT I" — "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me;" as a disciple deeply instructed in the doctrines of the CROSS, he instinctively repudiates the thought of attributing life to Adam (the head of the family of death), and corrects himself, as it were, when he says, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "I, NOT I" what deep doctrine is contained in the expression. Have we, as disciples, made such proficiency in the school of the CROSS as to ascribe all evil to ourselves, all good to Christ—sin and death in us, life and righteousness in Him? "Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above." Nothing perfect ascends up from man to God.

"I, NOT I!" It is a great practical principle. If the apostle says, "I speak as a man," or "Ye walk as men," he uses the expression disparagingly; it is not the high ground of one who has been CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST, but, nevertheless, IS ALIVE—in whom CHRIST LIVES. He has come down from divine to human motives. If he speaks about himself, he says, "I speak foolishly." Surely it were folly to speak of self, instead of Christ, unless compelled to do so, as the apostle was. But in his labors he still remembered, "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST," and where "I" would, almost necessarily and innocently, appear, the corrective comes in, "I, NOT I." Had he even to vindicate his apostleship, in writing to the Corinthians; as, likewise, to set before them that the gospel which he preached hinged on the resurrection of Christ, and that, touch that fact, the gospel was gone; he brings forward the witnesses to the resurrection (living witnesses), and then adds, "Last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Deep scholar, indeed, in the grace of God; well instructed disciple in the doctrine of the CROSS! The doctrine of the CROSS was not used by this disciple to set self aside as to judgment only, but to set self aside where it would fain show itself as though the Lord needed our help, our zeal, our energies. It is a

hard lesson to learn, not to look with complacency on our labors for Christ, and for the blessing of others, instead of looking to “the travail of His soul.”

“I, NOT I!” That mixed motives do we discover in ourselves! Where love should constrain, how often is there vanity and self-seeking! There is a vast amount of activity at work in the things of God; may it be increased; but it is only as the grace of God is with us, that any effectual work is really done. “Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” Labor in the Lord is not, cannot be, in vain. It will stand, and be made manifest in that day. Let there be all activity, and diligence, and patient painstaking; but when “I” would be prominent, then the CROSS is our refuge against self. “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Let there be the wholesome correction drawn from this doctrine. “I” must meet its end in the CROSS, that Christ may live in me. “I” must be set aside, too, by the CROSS, even in my labors, that the grace of God may appear. Thus “shall no flesh glory in His presence; but,” as it is written, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

Josiah and His Days: After All This

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.”—Jeremiah 17:7.

Faith alone can so go on with God as to prove His sufficiency, an absolute sufficiency for the need of His people. Hence is it that the Christian, with the record of Israel’s sin spread open before him, is emphatically admonished in the words: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” (Heb. 3:12) And again, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” (1 Cor. 10:12)

As we are by nature, God is not in all our thoughts; and though we turned to God, on belief of the gospel, yet are there a thousand ways in which “the sin that doth so easily beset” waits but the occasion to evidence itself afresh. There is, however, one form of this so subtle as to be all the more dangerous, to which I desire to direct attention; I mean the tendency, under the profession of acknowledging God in His gifts, to allow instruments and means to get between the soul and Himself.

When God has separated a people unto Himself, not only will He have that people to be for Himself—His people; but He is their God, and He will be reckoned on by them in all circumstances and for all exigencies; in other words, the God of Israel will be God to Israel. “Blessed is the people that is in such a case; yea, blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.” As an illustration of this relationship, see Caleb, that man of faith in the midst of a nation of no faith. (Josh. 14) He is just about to enter on the long-awaited-for inheritance, with strength unabated by the tear and wear of the way. “Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee.” Forty-five years ago he came up with eleven others of the rulers of Israel, to search out the land of promise; he then took back a good report, and made his boast in the God of Israel, as able to give it to His people, all adversaries and evil occurring hitherto or to come, notwithstanding. Listen now to his big-hearted profession, as he turns to Joshua and says: “Behold the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said, these forty and five years, ever since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. And yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.” What a fine testimony to the all-sufficiency and the faithfulness of the Holy One whom Israel have limited. The carcasses of a whole unbelieving generation strew the way that Caleb has trodden and attest the severity of Jehovah’s “breach of promise;” yet just and upright is He, and wilderness tribulations have but wrought patience; and patience, experience; and experience, a hope that hath not made ashamed, in the case of the man in whom there was “another spirit,” who, counting on the Promiser, embraced the promise. It has been happily observed that Canaan in the heart carries through the wilderness; and to this we may add, that, when God fills the eye, though naught but an untried and trackless waste, a place of no resources, with its terribleness be around us, it is God and not the desert we prove. “He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every

word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man-live.”

Though thy way be long and dreary,

Eagle strength He'll still renew:

Garments fresh and foot unwearied

Tell how God hath brought thee through.

When to Canaan's long-loved dwelling

Love divine thy foot shall bring,

There, with shouts of triumph swelling,

Zion's songs in rest to sing;

There no stranger God shall meet thee

(Stranger thou in courts above);

He who to His rest shall greet thee,

Greets thee with a well-known love.

But let us examine somewhat more closely into the special form of the evil heart of unbelief I have indicated. To this end we will look at Israel, first in the wilderness, then under one of the judges, and again as reigned over by one of the best of the kings.

For a brief moment, at the first, we see them standing in the attitude of faith. They are on the wilderness side of the Red Sea. Its waters, opened just now for their salvation, but closed again for the destruction of the Egyptian taskmaster, roll between a delivered people and the house of their hard bondage. They are celebrating in that song the triumphs of the right hand of the Lord. Not only has His hand already done valiantly for them, but it shall yet deliver. They measure everything by it: Pharaoh and his host are cast into the sea; sorrow takes hold on the inhabitants of Palestine; the dukes of Edom are amazed; the mighty men of Moab tremble; the inhabitants of Canaan melt away. Led forth of Him and guided in His strength, the redeemed of Jehovah are brought in and planted in the mountain of His inheritance, in the place which He has made for Him to dwell in. Not one thing remains to be done. All is accomplished. A faith that is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, bridges over all between and fills already its basket of the first-fruits of the land, to set it down before the Lord. And now Moses and the children of Israel are silent, and Miriam and the women are taking up the strain, with timbre's and dances; but, still their burden is the same, "Sing ye to the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath HE thrown into the sea."

Alas! this goodness is but as the morning cloud and the early dew. The Psalmist tells us: "They sang His praise—They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel!" (Psa. 106) Quickly does the song of boastfulness in the God of Israel become changed into loud, long murmurings! Is then the Lord's arm shortened, that it can no longer save? Is the ear, that bent down to their wail in Egypt, grown heavy, that it cannot hear? No; but the instrument of deliverance has been leaned on

by them, instead of the Deliverer; and this so really, that so soon as Moses is out of sight (gone up for them into the mount to the Lord, before whose terrible glory they were trembling but just now) they run in wild haste to Aaron, with the cry, 'Up, make us gods which shall go before us, for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him!' "They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the golden image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. They forgot God their Savior." Such is the way of man. He must have a something visible and tangible to look to, if faith in an unseen God be either wanting or on the wane.

But the scene shifts. It is the days of the judges. Israel have gone into open idolatry, and are bowing down to the gods of the uncircumcised. And the Lord whom they have provoked has sold them into the hands of the uncircumcised. Repenting Himself because of their groanings, by reason of the oppressor, He has once and again raised up for them "saviors." Yet "it came to pass, when the Judge was dead, that they returned and corrupted themselves worse than their fathers." Just now they are greatly impoverished, the hand of Midian prevails against Israel, and the Midianites, as grasshoppers for multitude, spread themselves over the land, and eat it up. Israel have betaken themselves to mountains, and to dens, and to caves. The highways are unoccupied; travelers walk through bye-ways. The harvest is reaped by others. The increase of the earth is destroyed, and there is no sustenance left to Israel; neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. Mark that man of Manasseh threshing wheat under an oak in secret, to hide it from the Midianites. An angel approaches him, and salutes him thus: 'The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor,... go deliver Israel, thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.' And now, through faith, the trembler is made strong, and after having first purged out idolatry from his home, is led forth to put to flight the armies of the aliens. It is the arm of the Lord's strength that has awaked for His people; and again, as in ancient days, when it broke Rahab (Egypt), it triumphs gloriously. Israel is delivered with a great deliverance. Yet they discern not aright the lighting down of that arm; but as their fathers did, so do they; the instrument fills their eye, and they importune him— 'Rule thou over us, thou and thy son, and thy son's son also; for thou hast delivered us from the hands of Midian!' But Gideon cannot allow this; he sets them in their proper relation to the Lord: neither will he rule over them, nor his son, that belongs to the Lord. But then, alas! we have to take the eye off the exploits and the self-denial of faith, to see him immediately afterward preparing a stumbling-block for this very people. He may have reasoned with himself that there could be nothing wrong in commemorating the victory just gained; this were not to usurp the Lord's place, but, on the contrary, a fitting acknowledgment that His servant has been valiant in fight for Israel. He asks for the golden earrings of the prey, makes of them an ephod, and puts it in his city; "which thing became a snare to Gideon and to his house;" moreover "all Israel went thither a whoring after it."

And now we turn from times of the wilderness and of the judges to "the days of Josiah the king," and it is still to find the same adulterous generation. They have backslidden with a continual backsliding. The kingly history is a dreary recital of provokings of the Holy One to anger, so that the reigns of a Jehoiaphat, a Jotham, and a Hezekiah stand out brightly as lights in the midst of a dark waste. The spirit of idolatry, dispossessed for a while by repentant Manasseh, has returned in sevenfold power; for "Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made," and "did worse and worse;" so that now, according to the number of the cities of Judah, are her gods, and according to the number of the streets in Jerusalem, they have set up altars to burn

incense unto Baal. The horses which the kings of Judah have given to the sun are stabled at the entering in of the house of the Lord (2 Kings 13:11), whilst the ark of the Lord has been cast out of the sanctuary. (2 Chron. 35:3) It is at this juncture, an hour of all but total apostasy, that the son of Amon, a child eight years old, comes to the throne. But how wondrous are the ways of God! He has reserved unto Himself, in the midst of these abominations, a remnant who, like Simeon and Anna of after days, sigh and cry before Him; and the boy king, suckled at the breasts of idolatry, finds grace in His eyes. The history of His work in and through Josiah is given with much minuteness in 2 Chronicles 34, 35.

In the eighth year of his reign, “while he was yet young,” Josiah begins to seek after the God of David his father. Four years after, at the age of twenty, he sets about purging Judah and Jerusalem of high places, groves, and carved images; breaks down the altars of Baal; makes dust of the idols, strews it upon the graves of their worshippers, and burns the bones of their priests on the altars. Nor does he stop here. As a consequence of the idolatry of the latter years of the reign of Solomon, ten tribes have been rent from the throne of David; but the faith in the energy of which Josiah acts has respect to the claims of Jehovah in regard of the land, and he will not cleanse Judah and Jerusalem only, but “so he did in the cities of Manasseh and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali.” And here we must not fail to notice an incident which, though unmentioned in these chapters, is given at some length in 2 Kings 23 Standing by the altar at Bethel (the seat of the false worship devised by Jeroboam, the first king of the separate kingdom of Israel), whilst engaged in the act of breaking it down and defiling it with the bones of its idolatrous priests, Josiah turns and notices an inscription at a short distance from him He inquires what it is, and is told by the men of the city, “It is the sepulcher of the man of God which came from Judah and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel.” More than three hundred years have elapsed since the man of God cried in the word of the Lord against the altar, and declared that a child should be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, who should do such and such things; and though signal indeed was the failure of the instrument, directly after speaking in the word of the Lord, that word has been brought to pass; so that as Josiah stands between the altar and the sepulcher, and listens to the prophecy, he has both a wondrous confirmation of his being the special servant of the Lord for the work he is engaged in, and a solemn admonition to hearken attentively to the Lord.

Again: six years after, he sends to the temple to repair and amend that which former kings of Judah have destroyed, and proceeds to restore, according to its prescribed form, the worship of the true God. In the midst of these labors a book is discovered by the high priest, a long neglected and forgotten book—what is it? “A book of the law of the Lord by Moses.” It is taken and read before the king. “And it came to pass when the king heard the word of the law, that he rent his clothes.” “Go,” he says, “inquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book.” Scripture may be neglected, but it cannot be broken; the Lord answers Josiah that, whilst he personally, on account of his tender-heartedness in trembling at the word, shall be gathered to his fathers in peace, so as not to see the evil, the curses read out of the book shall assuredly take hold. Having gathered together all the people, both great and small, into the house of the Lord, he reads before them all the words of the book of the covenant that has been found

there; makes a covenant, "with all his heart and all his soul," to perform that which is written in the book; causes all present to stand to it; takes away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertain to Israel, and brings back the people to the service of Jehovah. "And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers."

And now comes the crowning, as it were, of this zeal for the Lord. The Passover is kept after a most godly sort. The Levites prepare themselves by the houses of their fathers, after their courses, "according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son." They kill the Passover, sanctify themselves, prepare their brethren, and the priests sprinkle the blood from their hand, remove the burnt-offering, that they may give according to the division of the families of the people, to offer unto the Lord, "as it is written in the book of Moses." The passover is roasted, "according to the ordinance." The singers, the sons of Asaph stand in their places, "according to the commandment of David." Josiah has a "Thus saith the Lord" for all he does. What a wondrously lovely picture! "There was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." It was reserved for a backslidden people, on their return to God and His Word, to keep such a commemoration of the night much to be remembered, when the blood of the "lamb" was under His holy eye for His Israel, as even Solomon in all his glory never kept.

The hour is one of light and gladness in Zion. As they speak together we can hear them exclaim, Behold, what hath the Lord wrought, it is marvelous in our eyes! Yet there is rottenness at the core: "Judah hath not turned unto ME with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord." (Jer. 3:6,10) And thick darkness is gathering ahead, and he that letteth the bursting of the storm shall soon be taken out of the way.

Nor does the sun of Josiah go down in an altogether cloudless horizon. The emphatic words which stand at the head of this paper are found here, and form a hinge, on which the Bible narrative of Josiah and his times turns to a shaded side. "AFTER ALL THIS" (we read), "when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates; and Josiah went out against him." (vs. 20) The potsherds of the earth are at strife amongst themselves; wherefore is it that the Lord's anointed is found mixing himself up with their strife, unless indeed he have a word from the Lord bidding him to do so? Has he such a word? No; but the very opposite. Listen to Necho's remonstrance: "What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that He destroy thee not." And mark what the Scripture says, "Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo." (vs. 22)

How solemnly instructive is this. Whence comes it, that the ear but just now so attentive is deaf to the voice of God? We are told concerning another godly king, Uzziah, that "he was marvelously helped till he was strong; but when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction," and we may regard the case of Josiah as somewhat parallel. The flesh in a saint, through unwatchfulness, will fatten on the very prosperings of God; and a lifted-up heart both deafens and blinds. But though we may refuse to listen to the voice of God, there is no disguise by which we

can get from under His eye, and no shelter that will avail us. Feigning himself, like ungodly Ahab, to be another than himself, like Ahab he is struck down by an arrow commissioned of Him who sees through all disguises.

So fell Josiah—taken away in loving-kindness from the evil to come; yet sad and humbling is it to see a saint of God falling by the hand of the uncircumcised in an hour of self-will.

Great lamentation is made over him: “All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah; and Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing-men and the singing-women spake of Josiah in their lamentations unto this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and behold they are written in the Lamentations.” (vs. 25) Let us draw near to the mourners, and see if they have not some word of admonition for ourselves.

In the book of “The Lamentations of Jeremiah” (chap. 4:20), there are these significant words: “The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.”

It was with his whole heart and soul that Josiah set himself to work to bring back worshippers of graven images to the living and true God. He was a bright and a shining light, and the people were willing for a season to walk in his light. “All his days” (as we have seen) “they departed not from following the Lord.” Yet were they, at heart, according to the Lord’s declaration, idolaters still. In the light of Josiah they walked, not in the light of the Lord. Upon the breath of Josiah they lived, not upon the words that proceeded out of the mouth of God. Under the shadow of Josiah they thought to dwell, not under the shadow of the Almighty.

These things happened of old. They “are written for our admonition.” Like the bell swinging to and fro above the sunken rock, giving warning to the mariner that hard by where he is passing others have made wreck, they sound in our ears, even whilst we are being borne along by wind and tide, Take heed, nice heed, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God!

No man is really a Christian but he who has so received the gospel in power, that he has turned to God, and is entitled to know, that through the blood of the cross (which has purged his every sin), and in Him who is now at the right hand of God, he has been brought nigh, and that he may be in the presence of a God of absolute righteousness, not only without fear, but with exceeding joy. And then the Christian life, in its development down here, is not merely a fresh direction given to the religious instincts and activities of man, or the holding of certain dogmas and the shaping the conduct after a certain course; it is an habitual, continuous having to do with God through Christ—a believing God, an obeying God, a trusting in God, a fearing God, a joying in God, a walking with God, a worshipping God, a serving God—in short, a setting of Him ever before us, and of ourselves in heart and conscience ever before Him, according to that which He is and has revealed Himself to be. All true ministry is subservient to this, and ministry is healthful only as it does subserve it. In a certain sense, the thankful recognition of those through whom He works, is a recognizing of Himself, a holy and a happy thing— “We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.” “As my beloved sons I warn you... for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves:

for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." Most assuredly it is not a high degree of spirituality (whatever the pretension with which it clothe itself), but real dissonance with the mind of Him, who has given to the church the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher—at bottom the wretched pride and self-will of the flesh—that would ignore these and similar Scriptures. But then the special danger of the hour would not seem to lie so much in this as in an opposite direction—a thinking of man above that which is written. No age of the church has been wanting in noticeable instances of this way of departure from the living God, at once both the evidence and the means of spiritual decline. Nor are the days in which we live less markedly characterized by that which (however offensively, yet with truth) has been termed minister-worship, than by the hero-worship and idolatry of intellect for which they are proverbial. The divine purport of the ministry of the Word is to set and keep the conscience and the heart in immediate connection with God. Where this is effected in grace and holy power, the instrument will be comparatively out of sight. When man intervenes between God and the soul, God is displaced. What godly jealousy was manifested by that good servant of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul, when already, in the very infancy of the church, a carnal glorying in teachers was at work—jealousy for his Master, jealousy over his brethren, jealousy against self: He would no more allow the Christians at Corinth to be putting man (even though it were himself and Apollos) in a wrong place, than he would accept for himself and Barnabas, at Lystra, garlands and sacrifices from the priest of Jupiter. To these he said, "Sirs, why do ye these things? we also are men of like passions with you." To those he wrote, "Let no man glory in men." "These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of man above that which is written." "Who then is Paul, and who Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase; so then neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

Moreover, not only is it of the very essence of idolatry so to lean upon the instrument as to relieve ourselves of that which is ever irksome to the flesh, the sense of the most direct, continuous, and absolute dependence upon God; but however devoted, however much and long-used and honored of the Lord the instrument may have been, yet is he, after all, but a man of like passions with ourselves, and a carnal glorying in him may prove a dreadful snare to his own soul. Many an one of whom it might be said, "His praise was in all the churches," has here made shipwreck; and where a like catastrophe has been graciously averted, in how very many cases more it has been at the cost of much painful discipline of soul! When the stripling David returned from the unequal fight he had waged on behalf of Israel, in the name of the God of Israel, the giant's head and sword in his hands, the women sang his praises. They were no daughters of Miriam; their song was not, "THE LORD hath triumphed gloriously;" but, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." "And Saul," we read, "eyed David from that day and forward." Can we not trace in Saul's bitter and unrelenting persecution of David, consequent on this ill-judged comparison, something far deeper than the envy and wounded pride of man, even a divine antidote, a "messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him," by the same prescient love that dispensed to Paul his "thorn in the flesh"?

There is but ONE— "a nail in a sure place" —on whom we may safely depend; there is but ONE under whose shadow we may dare to dwell. Of that ONE the voice from the excellent glory has

testified, as the cloud hid a Moses and an Elias out of sight, "Hear HIM." In the Song of Songs we find the Beloved saying of the Spouse, "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters;" and the Spouse responding, "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me into the banqueting-house, and His banner over me was love." What do you know, dear reader, of a like reciprocity of love between Christ and the soul? of a present, living fellowship in the power of the Holy Ghost with Himself? In the measure that we are dwelling under His shadow, we shall be occupied with Him; not with instruments, and organization, and doctrines, and things about Christ, but with CHRIST HIMSELF! And what a banqueting house is that into which He bringeth, and where, with the banner of His love spread over us, a deep adoring delight is found in looking from the cross to the glory, and from the glory to the cross, and in proving in that love stronger than death a living love ever occupied with and about ourselves! Oh, let us jealously see to it, lest, through a trusting in man, and making flesh our arm, it be with us as with the dry and stunted heath in the desert! (Jer. 17:6) Let us ponder these histories of Moses and the golden calf, Gideon and the golden ephod, Josiah and the sin of Judah, graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of their altars.

Christ the Servant, and the Service of Life

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

This manifestation of the Son—the coming of “the eternal life, which was with the Father,” into the world, was in order to make known the Father, and to take us along with Himself into fellowship with the Father. The One who “was with God, and was God,” “humbled Himself,” “took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” (Phil. 2:7)

As to the manner of His coming into this world, that was altogether unexpected. John had testified of His greatness; but that He who was the brightness of His Father’s glory, “the express image of His person,” should come in all the lowliness in which He did, taking into connection with His own person our nature, that was altogether unexpected.

There are many reasons why He thus took flesh, besides the great one of shedding His own blood for the putting away of sin. As a great Prophet, He came to speak in a language familiar to us all the great secrets of the Father: God raised up a Prophet like unto us, that human lips might declare the great secrets of the Father’s bosom. Again, He came that He might work the works of the Father, walking about among the children of men only that He might “declare” God.

He was “the living bread that came down from heaven” — “made flesh,” not only that He might shed His blood to put away sin, but also communicate His life. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.... Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life.... He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.”

This wondrous person, the Son of God, coming from “the Father” —from heaven, thus declared to our faith, ever spake of Himself as having no connection with the earth, except, as such, in blessing a revolted world. How invariably He speaks as having no purpose here save as the “sacrifice for sin” to redeem that which belonged to Him, and as the “sent” One to reveal that which had been kept secret till then, giving a capacity to know and understand the Father. He came from heaven to speak of heaven. Over and over again these are His mysterious words, “Ye are from beneath (“he that is of the earth speaketh of the earth,” John 3:31,32); I am from above.” He was ever the “Son of Man which is in heaven,” and as such “declared” the Father who was in heaven. He spake not of Himself save as the “sent” One of God—the servant of the Father. The value was not only in the message, but in the messenger; all His thoughts were upon the One He came to “declare.” “I seek not Mine own glory; there is One that seeketh and judgeth.” He never sought Himself. As one with the Father ere the world was—His “delight” from everlasting, He came into the world to speak of that which was from the beginning, from all eternity—to “declare” the secrets of the bosom of the Father, that which He alone knew. Yet He was not so much the messenger of

grace, as the very grace of the message.

As the mysterious stranger, passing thus along the earth, He was unknown by the natural man. His countrymen asked, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Others said, "We know not whence He is." But there were some who, by the Spirit of God, were able to discern Him as "the sent" of God— "the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth:" "to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The eye that saw Him looked on glory, the ear that listened to Him heard of heaven, the hand that touched Him laid hold on "eternal life." The Son was manifested to communicate that which He revealed; He presented Himself to the eye, the ear, the touch; there was "eternal life" in seeing, hearing, handling this "Word of life." When the eye of a poor sinner rested on Him in spiritual discernment, it let in the light of heaven—the "life" of Him whom it discerned; when the ear heard, it communicated to the heart that which it heard; when the hand touched, virtue went out of Him; every sense that became sensitive to Jesus—had to do with "life"—the very "eternal life" which was in God.

In speaking of these things, we must of course not forget that they are made known to us as pardoned sinners; "eternal life" could not have been communicated ere the removal of guilt and the possession of positive righteousness. Until after the blood had been shed, they knew but little of the meaning of those words— "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." But what did they see? "the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" and what they saw, and heard, and touched, they received— "the eternal life which was in the bosom of the Father."

Coming from "the Father" the mysterious one, what had He to do with the world—with its associations?—nothing! He walked in it, but He was not of it. Here for a little while on the errand of love He was separate from all its maxims, all its habits. It is not that He did not mingle in its busy scenes; but when there, His thoughts, His feelings, were ever with the Father; He was "from above," His place, the presence of the Father.

Beloved, I pray you notice these words of our Lord, when speaking of His people— "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world! "It is not as though He gave a commandment unto them that they should strive to be heavenly, but He says, "they are not of the world!" By birth, by being, they are heavenly— "born from above!" "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The man that hath this breath of heaven communicated to him, is constituted a heavenly person. Jesus often said to the Jews, "I am from above" — "I am not of this world" — "ye know not whence I am." He knew whence He was and whither He was going—others did not. So with the saints— "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." We have really life—from God—are born from above, and go thither; though undiscerned by others, is not this the meaning of those words— "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit"? We are "from above"—no more "of this world" than Christ is "of this world." Ask a Christian man whence he has come—his answer ought to be in the language of

Christ— “I am from above!” that which is true of Christ, is true of those who are His, though it is undiscerned by others whence they come, and whither they go. Dear brethren, this is not a mere title, but a reality; not a shadow, but a substance. We are not only reformed men—men changed, so as to have better thoughts and better feelings; but those who are “born of God” — “sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty!” substantially in possession of that life which was from the beginning in the bosom of the Father. It is a birth from heaven. Thus should we feel with regard to the world in which we are— “I am from above!”

Again: What is the language of Jesus in John 17:7 “As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world.” Whence came He into the world? From Nazareth? No; but “from above,” “from heaven,” “from the Father.” We are “sent” whence He came, “not of the world,” even as He was not of it, “given” to Him out of it, “begotten of God.” The service to which we are sent, that of Christ, to serve for a little while here, in all love and self-denial, waiting, beloved, as having come from God, waiting till the Lord comes to take us to himself, to be forever with Him.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle speaks of Melchizedek: he comes abruptly no one knows whence: he returns no one knows whither. The mysterious stranger: he comes to the exhausted Abraham, giving him bread and wine to refresh his fainting soul; and having executed his mission of blessing, he is again lost sight of: so Christ came, “without beginning of days,” “without descent,” “made flesh:” but then the eternal Word, the eternal Son of God, undiscerned except by the faithful, of whom Abraham was the type; receiving the rent flesh and shed blood of God’s lamb, and paying the homage to priesthood and royalty combined, which the tithes implied.

What we need in mediation is one thoroughly acquainted with the Father, with all His thoughts and feelings, and yet able to sympathize with us. Connect one coming out from God, from the holy secret of His presence, one with God, the other, from among the sorrows and infirmity of the people, as Aaron, one with man, and you get the priesthood of the Lord Jesus; “made a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Taken into union with such an one, with this stranger, this blessed Son of God, what are we? What He was— “not of this world.”

It is true that all the restlessness and the questionings of the heart must be settled before we can search into this glory; but, dear brethren, though feeling our own wretchedness, had we the distinct apprehension that we are “born of God,” thus taken up into union with the heavenly stranger, when getting the comfort of this in our own souls, the question would be, What am I to do? What am I to think about, as regards occupation in this world? The moral man takes his own course in a respectable way—Is the Christian, as the reformed man, merely to become more moral than he was before, to conduct himself with more propriety? No! directly he knows that he is “born from above,” “born of God,” he feels that by nature, by birth, he is higher than angels! higher than Gabriel! (Gabriel is but a servant, though an exalted and glorious one, we children, sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty) The question must then be, “How shall I walk worthy of being a son of God?” “Wherefore am I left here in the world as not of it?” well might he ask. “As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world.” What are the thoughts and feelings, what the impulses and necessities of this heaven-born man, what his objects? My brethren, would that I could impress upon your souls, as on my own, these words, “sent into the world;” they do so plainly declare to us a previous taking out of it. We are heavenly men in heaven,

though left here, not as to our affections merely, but as to our nature; it is “from above:” we are “born again,” made partakers of the life of Him who dwells in the bosom of the Father, who was “the Son of Man” which is in heaven, “though made flesh” here.

Just then in the same proportion as that life is developed in us shall we have thoughts and feelings and motives like His; His desires, His delights, and affections will become the necessities of the new nature. It is “Christ in us.”

And what did He when here but take the shepherd’s staff, feed, guide, and keep His “sheep” together? Where did His thoughts ever rest? On those whom the Father had given Him—His “sheep” and “lambs;” they were the objects of His constant solicitude, His tender care. At the close of His ministry He prays, “Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest Me I have kept.” Whether in life or death, He came to “gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad.” Gathering them out of the world, bringing them out of evil, watching and praying for them, waiting upon them, explaining to them about the Father, this was His object while, here; and it was not His way then only—it is His way still! When leaving the world He said to Peter, “Lovest thou Me?” What was this for? something for Himself? No! When the heart answers, “Thou knowest that I love Thee,” His claim is, “Feed My sheep! feed My lambs!” Such is His charge to Peter; such to each of us. He has not only given Himself, but He would claim all the grace He has communicated on behalf of His “sheep” and “lambs” — “feed My sheep.”

It was this for which He came: knowing and acting according to His mind we must look around us—seek out in this wide world, and see who are the “sheep” and “lambs” of Christ. Whatever form or amount of evil they may be in, they are those upon whom the eye and affections of the “great Shepherd” rest, and they are to be the objects of our care. His claim upon us is, “feed My sheep!” His desire, their blessing—their being gathered out into what many of us have proved, though amidst much trial, the comfort of brotherly love. It is no question as to what is the character of the children of God; they are loved by Him. Ignorant they may be; foolish, obstinate, perverse; but on that account only the more needing our ministry of care and grace and love.

It is impossible that the impulses of eternal life can work in us, save after the pattern of our Master, of Him who is all to us. Look at Jesus. I see Him girding Himself, bearing patiently with the ignorant, going on in His labor of love, washing the feet of His disciples, until it brought out “not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!”

This is the place in which we are called to stand. “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” We are to be debtors to Him—debtors to the service of Christ; but what then? Grace from Him leads into service. His love becomes so shed abroad in our hearts, that the Spirit of Service towards those who are around us flows forth, and constrains us to “wash their feet.” We may have it said to us, “Thou shalt not wash my feet!” but then Christ ceased not for this.

If we let Christ into our hearts as a servant—our servant, we must go out in service. It is impossible to discern this grace in Him, girding Himself to wash our feet, and yet not gird our hearts for service. How can we stand before this stooping, humbled Son of God, and not humble ourselves? How can we see this and rest? Oh let us be debtors to Him for all—love Him, fulfill His desires,

covet to embrace this privilege of doing as He has done! If He wash our feet, virtue goes forth from His touch, and our hearts are molded into His image in this aspect of grace—this exercise of love. The grace communicated takes its original form, makes the heart the heart of a servant, and directs it to the same objects as His.

The life of God in the soul is love. When love is shed abroad in the heart, it suppresses all its horrid selfishness—the hateful passions that are there, and the special objects of it will be, those who are given to Jesus of the Father—His “sheep” and “lambs.”

We have been made partakers of the divine nature, not only that we might be happy in being blessed ourselves, but also to have the happiness of seeing others made happy, and this is the happiness of love—pure love, which loves where there is nothing loveable in the thing loved.

Well, when they will let us, we should serve them; when they will not, still follow them with love. What are we doing see the church of God mixed up with darkness; the saints; amidst every kind of corruption, glittering like pieces of silver in the midst of dust. I read— “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” What must I do? Gather them out. In the parable in Luke 15 we see Christ gathering the sheep and giving rest to their souls; in Matthew 18:12,13, seeking to restore. Our services may differ, but the impulses of love cannot stop. Is there a child of God backsliding? The impulse of eternal life is to wash his feet. Supposing he reject my love, let me persevere till the answer is, “Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!” Are saints in evil? Wait on them, if near enough; if out of reach, write to them; if at the end of the world, still send after them, in order to keep up the healthful circulation of life and love. It is true that the character of our service would differ; but our desire ought to be the same, “to gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad.” Wherever a child of God is, however blinded by prejudice, the impulse of eternal life must reach. But love cannot stop even here. What will it be by-and-by? On what does the heart of Christ rest? All “the children of God scattered” abroad— “all saints.” His heart, His care, embraces all. While we rest in spirit upon His bosom, we are compassed about with infirmities. He bears “all saints” upon His heart, glistening as bright stones on the breastplate before the Father, exhibiting the end to which they are predestined as “heirs of glory.” A sister in the Lord was led to read Romans 16. She poured over it for some time without making anything of it, till at last the record of Phebe, and the many other saints of God who had passed away from this world, awakened the thought of her own association with them, and pressed on her soul the blessedness of identification with living saints, and the privilege of ministering to them.

What have we to do with circumstances? Is Satan stronger than Christ? Is the eternal life to be checked? Let our hearts go forth, not in sectarianism, but in service to all saints. Wherever there is a child of God, whatever his circumstance or condition, it is still— “feed My sheep—feed My lambs!” The impulse of eternal life extends to all that are Christ’s, whether near where my personal acts can reach them, or distant where letters of kindness are the only means it may be of ministering to them—it is still “feed My sheep!”

This service of love is not only for those who have any special gift, there is not one who knows the love wherewith he has been loved that has not received the commission— “feed My sheep “ Oh if you can discern the love of Christ in stooping at your feet, there is not a morsel, a particle of that love in your soul which does not respond to that word— “feed My sheep!” This meets the

selfishness and coldness of our hearts; does the thought of His love press on your soul, it must be accompanied with that word— “feed My sheep!” It may be we shall have to do so amid scorn, amid harsh response, but what then? All His love was spent on the unworthy, the undeserving. How did “the eternal life” manifested among men act? How were its energies spent? What path did it tread? Was it that of taking ease, forgetful of the “sheep”? was it repulsed by indifference? No! in seeking out, waiting upon, washing the feet of the unworthy, undeserving children of God. Oh let us take no ease! Remember He is girded; and His claim upon us, upon each of us is, “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye ought also to wash one another’s feet.”

I say not what may be attained; we wait for the coming of the Lord. Should we not desire to be found of Him, with our loins girded about, washing the feet of His disciples?

Love, like the stone cast into the water, forms one circle, and then another, and then another round it. The principle that locks two souls together cannot be satisfied until it embraces all. Wherever there is but one stray or diseased sheep of the flock of Christ, let us remember that word— “feed My sheep!”

The Lord give us to see our place, it will be to say, “Death works in us, but life in you.” But would you not desire to have His love so shed abroad in your hearts that not one selfish thought should remain?

Oh for grace to deny self in all things! (Phil. 4:5-7)

Extract From a Letter on Perfection

You must take your place right before the Lord Jesus Christ—the Savior. The Epistle to the Hebrews, I may say, puts you there.

In early days, God Almighty set Himself before Abraham, when Abraham had taken up confidence in Hagar, confidence in the flesh, confidence in something other than the all-sufficiency of God. “I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.” (Gen. 17:1) This was a rebuke. Abraham was not then perfect in his generation. He had lost the power of the name or revelation of God. The state of his soul did not answer to that in God which was dispensed or made known to him. That is, Abraham was not perfect, failing in confidence when God was with him as the Almighty.

In the days of the ministry of the Son (revealing Him who makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good) perfection of another order was looked for, as we read in Matthew 5:44-48. There the Father, in all the full, free bountifulness of paternal goodness, is set before us by the Lord, and perfection is imitation of Him. Confidence was perfection, when the Almighty was revealed, or stood before the soul; generosity, that counts only on the need, and not on the worthiness of its object, is perfection when the Father stands before us.

So, in the day of the same ministry, perfection again takes another form, as we may see in Matthew 19:21. The Lord Jesus had been on the heavenly hill, in the glory that belonged to that place, with Moses and Elias. (Chapter 17) He was, in an eminent sense, the Stranger—the self-emptied heavenly Stranger here; and standing before the rich young man, He speaks to him of a perfection suited to such an one: “If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me.” This is a high order of perfection indeed—imitation of the fully-emptied heavenly Jesus. And nothing less than this is the living, practical perfection that suits the heavenly calling. “I have overcome the world,” says Jesus. Perfection is the taking of that place with Him, which this dispensation opens and shows to us. Paul had much of it realized in his soul when he uttered Philippians 4, and the Hebrew saints knew a good deal of it, as we see them in Hebrews 10:32-34, in the day of their illumination.

But, beloved, we must not stop here. Good it is to look at all this, and discern these forms and characters (different as they are) of perfection in the people of God. But God looks to be glorified in us in a still different form of perfection, and we find this precious secret in the epistle to the Hebrews.

There, the Holy Ghost summons our conscience into the presence of Christ as a Savior. His perfection for us sinners is there made known to us. The law never provided in Moses, or in Aaron, or in Joshua, or in the victim on the Jewish altar, or in all these put together, a perfect Captain of salvation, or Author of eternal salvation; but God has given us such an one in His suffering Son; and the conscience of the sinner is called into His presence, summoned to stand before Him, and to take of the perfection which is there revealed to it, by enjoying peace and cleansing, and

consequent boldness of access into the divine presence.

Here is your perfection, beloved, obtained by the gaze of faith at the Lamb of God. It is not the perfection of confidence which knows God's all-sufficiency for the circumstances of life, nor the perfection of generosity which acts after the pattern of paternal goodness, nor the perfection of imitation of a heavenly Jesus; but it is that form of perfection that glorifies God more than all, because it glorifies Him in that grace that has dispensed a remedy to our deepest necessity, and healed a breach in the tenderest place—the conscience of a wretched, ruined, good-for-nothing sinner.

And God would have this perfection, the principle and power of all others. If we trust in God, if we imitate the bountifulness of the Father, if we walk in the steps of a heavenly, self-renouncing Master, it must be because we have been “illuminated” by the sight, or rather by the clear, full, and gladdening light of Him who has perfected Himself for our salvation. “He is perfect for you, though you may be weak in looking at Him.” J. G. B.

Caleb

“We are saved by hope;” but hope is divine certainty, because it is connected with the purpose of God. All His own counsel is before God, and it shall stand. He has measured the difficulties in the way of its accomplishment by the resources of His own grace, His own wisdom, and His own strength. Neither the frailty of the creature, nor the power of the adversary, shall prevent the blessing of those who are “the called according to the purpose of God. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” It is this result of the purpose of God which is the object of the hope of the Christian. It is not the hope of forgiveness of sins, neither the hope of righteousness, nor the hope of eternal life, properly; for the hope of which the apostle speaks is based on these wondrous blessings, which are already secured by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing short of these blessings can result from the work of the Holy Ghost, at one and the same time communicating life to the soul, and presenting Jesus to it as the object of faith. If there be uncertainty of hope, it is because the soul is not really reposing on Christ Himself and His perfect work. Whenever this is the case (and how common it is, alas! we too well know), the thing hoped for is the ascertainment of forgiveness of sins and righteousness, instead of pardon and righteousness being the groundwork of hope. But real, scriptural hope—being the expectation of that, in manifestation, which is already known in the consciousness of the soul by faith, yea, and enjoyed, too, by the Spirit—is necessarily connected with patience. “Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” When Christ shall appear, not only will the saints appear with Him in glory, but their longings for the full enjoyment, without any hindrance, of that which is theirs already shall be fully realized.

But notwithstanding the certainty and blessedness of our hope, it has pleased our God, who knows the cravings of that life which is communicated by the Holy Ghost, and flows from union with our risen and glorified Head, to make provision for the sustenance and encouragement of our souls by giving to us the Holy Ghost as the earnest of the inheritance. He is not the earnest so much in the way of leading our souls from what we do taste now to what we may expect to taste when we are in glory; but it is rather in the way of the divine certainty of those things which God has prepared for them that love Him that He now gives the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. The light in which we regard the truth of the earnest of the Spirit will make a great difference as to the stability of our souls. This relation of the Holy Ghost to us is distinct from those spiritual instincts which He Himself has communicated. Being given as the earnest, in consequence of the certainty of the determinate counsel of God in bringing those whom He has called to glory, He is at once the Spirit of revelation to show to us the things which are freely given to us of God, and the Spirit of communion, so as to enjoy all that which He thus shows us; but at the same time He is Himself the earnest, which never could have been given, save as the witness of accomplished redemption, and because of the certainty of future glory. It is thus that so many blessings, which, as to actual manifestation and real unhindered enjoyment, are yet future, are spoken of most truly as present. This blessed truth might be largely illustrated. In one sense, we wait for our blessings; in another,

we have them already. The manifestation of our sonship is yet future; but we wait not to be sons. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be [rather, what we shall be hath not yet been manifested]: but we know that, when He shall appear [be manifested], we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." But Christ has already manifested Himself to us, "although He be not manifested to the world. So again, He is gone to prepare mansions for us in the Father's house, and we expect that He will come again, and receive us unto Himself; that where He is, there we may be also." This is the characteristic hope of the church; but mark "the earnest" resulting from this certain hope: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode [mansion] with him." Most blessed earnest: the Father and the Son, now in the unity of the Spirit, making their mansion with us! We are sons, waiting for the adoption. Strange language! yet how real. We wait for the adoption—to wit, the redemption of the body—because to be in a glorified body, like Christ Himself, with Christ in heaven, is the proper suited place for the sons of God. But because of this, being born of God now, we are sons, and God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father." Observe, the Spirit is not given to make us sons, but because we are sons; and although not actually in our native home, yet God enables us to speak, and think, and act as His sons, although we are as unknown to the world as Jesus Christ Himself was while He was in the world.

We need faith, for "we walk by faith;" we need hope, "for we are saved by hope;" but we need also the Holy Ghost Himself as the present earnest of our inheritance, lest we faint and grow weary by the way. Grace and glory are two consecutive links in the golden chain of God; but, for the most part to us, there is practically an interval filled up by painful experience on our part, and yet such experience as causes us to learn grace now, "manifold grace," in a manner we could hardly learn it in glory, just as assuredly we shall learn it in glory, even "the riches of grace," after a manner inconceivable by us at present. The joyous triumphant song of Israel on the banks of the Red Sea, witnessing the grace and power of God in their deliverance from Egypt, stopped not short of their immediate introduction into Canaan. The Holy Ghost who indited that song could not celebrate the unbelief of Israel, but the grace, power, and faithfulness of God. "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation. The people shall hear and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away." There was no reason why deliverance out of Egypt should not have been introduction into Canaan; the grace and power which had effected the one was pledged for the accomplishment of the other, and could alone effect it. But how different is the actual experience of God's people, whether typically redeemed as Israel, or really as the church, from the truth of God, which either may celebrate. Israel trembled before those whom they mentioned in their song as melting away before them. And the whole wilderness history intervenes between deliverance from Egypt and introduction into Canaan. And we ourselves also often tremble before already conquered enemies, triumphing by faith the moment we bring in God as manifested in Christ, but often dropping the notes of triumph for murmurs or fears, because the heart is not really occupied with the things freely given to us of God.

It is truly refreshing, in the sorrowful history of Israel in the wilderness, to find such a one as Caleb. He is not one of the great public actors as Moses, Aaron, or Joshua. One of the "heads of the children of Israel," of the honored tribe of Judah, he was going the weary round of the wilderness with his brethren, but assuredly with lighter heart and firmer step than they; and in this respect he so blessedly illustrates what the earnest of the Spirit is, and at the same time is a type of that class of "unknown," "yet well known," Christians who, apart from murmuring and strife, are steadily wending their way to that rest, of which the Lord Himself has spoken to them. Historically, Caleb presents to us a feature which we find not in Moses himself. He had known Egypt for the first forty years of his life, he had trodden Canaan forty days, he had gone through the wilderness, and had passed over Jordan into the possession of Canaan, and was still full of manly vigor and courage. He was one of those who, through faith, had obtained promises, and was not satisfied till he was in actual possession.

"On the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt," Moses and Aaron number Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, "every male by their polls, from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel." (Num. 1:1-4) Again, "after the plague," in which twenty-four thousand perished in the matter of Baal-peor, Moses and Eleazer the priest number Israel in the plains of Moab, by Jordan, near Jericho; "but among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun." (Num. 26:1,4,64,65)

While this verified the Word of God, we may still ask, What hindered Caleb and Joshua from being worn out by the trial of the wilderness, which had worn out all their generation! Let Caleb himself answer. "Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadeshbarnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the Lord my God. And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said." (Josh. 14:6-12)

"I brought him word again as it was in mine heart." Caleb owned that it was a pleasant land which the Lord gave to the children of Israel, and his heart was set upon it. He could discern the difference between that land and Egypt; between the land which was cultivated with all the appliance of human skill, "watered with the foot," and "a land of hills and valleys, which drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." His treasure was in the land, and there his heart was. Others esteemed Egypt preferable to the wilderness, when

their hearts were discouraged from going up to possess Canaan, on account of the difficulties in the way; but Caleb esteemed Canaan, with all the difficulty of entering into it, as far more precious than Egypt with present ease, but with present bondage also. Canaan was in his heart all the time he traversed the wilderness. He had tasted the fruit of Canaan; his eyes had beheld it; and he had not the report of others as to the land, but his own "feet had trodden it." It was this which made him tread the wilderness with such elastic steps. Besides this, he had the sure word of the Lord's promise to support him. He knew the certain end unto which his wanderings, in company with others, must lead. As they encamped or broke up, at the commandment of the Lord, he could either "rest in his tent," or traverse the wilderness with the land in his heart, and say, after every weary march or lengthened encampment. The wilderness time is far spent; the day of again seeing the land is at hand. As his contemporaries wasted away, how solemn must have been the admonition to his soul against the sin of unbelief; how forcibly must the rapid passing away of that evil generation have brought these words to his remembrance— "Because all those men which have seen My glory, and My miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted Me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it: but My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." "God hath given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." This was the comfort, strength, and establishment of apostles, as well as of common Christians. Christ Himself, to whom the Spirit ever bears witness, is thus not only the object of faith, but the object of desire also. It is as the object of desire that He is known now in earnest by the Spirit. Experimentally, He is never known by the soul in all His own attractive loveliness until He be received as "all our salvation." The selfish heart of man cannot bear to contemplate such perfection, condemnatory of itself, until that lawful, selfish craving is answered, "What must I do to be saved?" by, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." We can only study Him by knowing Him as the Savior. But when He is so known, what graciousness do we find in His own word— "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." He comes now into the heart by the Spirit: blessed earnest indeed of His coming for us, to be with Him where He is. It is thus, too, that the apostle speaks to us: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you." Well indeed says another: "Whom not having seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." If the Spirit of God shows to us the things which are freely given to us of God, He shows them not as in the distant future, but being Himself the earnest of the inheritance, He now glorifies Jesus, taking of His things and showing them unto us, and showing them as ours now in Him, so that we can taste and handle our own blessings. We too are solemnly warned as to the evil of unbelief in finding many an object to which we have fondly clung passing away, so that bitter disappointment would ensue were it not that by the Spirit we more fully realized, and were led more deeply to taste, the unfailing blessings which are ours in Christ.

"Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the Lord my God." It is no presumption in any of us to answer to the testimony of God to our own souls. So did Caleb; for the Lord said, "But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully." Caleb had searched the land, following the Lord his

God there, when the Lord Himself was his guide and defense, and no enemy could set upon him. He had seen that the land “was exceeding good;” but he reckoned on the good pleasure of the Lord in His people. “If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us.” The soul of Caleb rested entirely on the grace and power of God, which had caused them to triumph at the Red Sea, and had kept the spies in searching the land. The same grace and power could alone lead them into possession of the land. On this, and this alone, he reckoned. Only let his soul recognize where the Lord was, and he could see victory. But the very same principle of fully following the Lord, which made him encourage the people to go up, would hinder him from the attempt, after that the Lord had said, “Tomorrow turn again the way of the Red Sea;” for the Lord had no delight in the people. Where the Lord was there was both grace and power; and Caleb had to learn that grace and power for forty years in the wilderness on which he had so early reckoned, and which eventually put him in actual possession of the very part of the land which he had trodden with his feet. He fully followed the Lord through the wilderness, and knew Him there as his guardian and guide whom he had known as a mighty deliverer out of Egypt, and who had introduced him into Canaan, and enabled him to see and search the land and know its fruits.

The Spirit of God is presented to us in direct contrast with the spirit of the world. “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” The spirit of the world is one of restless activity and inquiry, either to find out something new, or to invent some remedy against the multiform misery of man. It may take either a speculative or a practical turn, but it never discovers the satisfactory remedy. “Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labor in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?” The spirit of the world is ever advancing, but never reaching its end; leading ever to that which is coming, but never yet has come. The Spirit which is of God is the very opposite. The Holy Ghost produces in the saint “the spirit of a sound mind.” He leads the soul backward to the past, and forward to the future. He steadies the soul by leading it to repose on the already accomplished work of Christ on the cross; and from thence He animates the soul, by leading it into the glorious prospect set before it—a prospect not of some yet undiscovered panacea for man’s misery that is found in the past in the cross of Christ, neither of a vague and ignorant futurity, but that “hidden wisdom of God, concerning things which God has prepared before the foundation of the world to our glory, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, but which God hath revealed to us by His Spirit.” The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth, and can never have a higher subject of testimony than He has at present—the sufferings of Christ and the glory which is to follow. He cannot reveal to us higher blessings than He reveals at present; and He Himself is the present earnest in the heart of the believer, because those blessings are so certain, and already secured in Christ. If Caleb needed to have his heart occupied with Canaan to cheer his spirit in the wilderness, we not only need the earnest of the Spirit for the same purpose, but also to keep us from the seductive power of the spirit of the world. And this He does by showing to us the things freely given to us of God as so high and blessed that they have not even been conceived by the daring boldness of man’s heart. As the earnest, He leads the soul to long to see Christ as He is, and to be like Him, and thus, too, leads in the path of fully following the Lord. To be ever with the Lord is the blessing in prospect; but to have Him ever with us now is the consequent earnest. “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to

you.” How is this made good by the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter. Oh that with purpose of heart we might cleave unto the Lord, and say in the midst of sorrowful experience, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.”

“And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said.” The Holy Spirit, as the earnest, is the Spirit “of promise;” not only as being Himself the “promise of the Father,” but substantiating promises to the soul. As Caleb saw his contemporaries die off day by day, how much he needed the encouragement of the specific promise of the Lord— “The Lord hath kept me alive, as He said.” The Holy Ghost is the quickener, He is the earnest, and He is also the Holy Spirit of promise, thus giving special value to the Word, to the Scriptures, bringing it to remembrance, and applying a familiar text with unknown power, because such a promise or such a scripture exactly suits the circumstances of our need. “As He said.” How important is this. Subjection of mind to the authority of Scripture no less distinguishes the guidance of the Holy Spirit from the spirit of the world than it distinguishes real spirituality from cloudy mysticism. The Scripture becomes of increasing value in proportion as the spirit of the age advances. As applied by the Spirit of truth, it gives the consciousness of certainty when the spirit of the world, in the freedom of inquiry, is leading into general skepticism. The result of these two conflicting spirits—the spirit of the world and the Spirit which is of God—is, that the one will lead to set the stability of created things against the promise of Christ coming; the other, to throw the soul more entirely on His promise. (2 Peter 3) But the soul needs now establishment and encouragement, and the Holy Ghost, as the earnest, gives such a reality to the promises of God in Scripture, that the soul is enabled to set, “As He says,” against all appearances of things or opinions of men.

“As my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.” All the weary round of forty years of toil in the wilderness had not unpaired the strength of Caleb. He had sung that wondrous note— “The Lord is my strength.” He had acted on that strength when He searched the land, and was ready, at the prime of manhood, to go up and possess the land; and now, at fourscore and five years, he finds his strength the same. “The Lord was his strength. And what is the Holy Ghost to us in one aspect as the earnest but “the Spirit of power.” In the strictest sense, the power which acts towards us and in us is always the same. But it is only known by faith; even “the exceeding greatness of the power of God answering to that which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.” If we attempt the smallest difficulty without regard to this power, we are foiled; but if the greatest obstacle presents itself, through faith in the Lord our strength we prevail. Hence the word, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” The Spirit witnesses to us of the triumph of Christ; but His indwelling in us is a fruit of that triumph. The Lord has triumphed for us, and He also triumphs in us. We celebrate already our victory. Through Him who loved us as more than conquerors God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” But that power is now actually manifested in strengthening the saints with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness. The characteristic form of power now is endurance. It is by patient continuance in well-doing that we seek for glory, honor, and immortality. The spirit of the world is that of impatience with delay, and desire of grasping some supposed present blessing; but the Spirit which is of God, being Himself the earnest of a certain inheritance, becomes especially the Spirit of power in enabling us patiently to wait for what is ours already. It is thus that, although “the outer man may decay, the inner is renewed day by day.” The Holy Ghost keeps the

eye looking on invisible realities, making them, as it were, more palpable day by day. Each day brought Caleb nearer to Canaan, which was "in his heart." Blessed indeed to see an aged disciple in whom the cravings of the mind for novelty have passed away, who has gone through, it may be, also the ordeal of worldly fascination, who has found his progress very checkered indeed, disappointment succeeding disappointment, desire dropping off after desire, yet all tending to one thing, to make him know the value of one blessed object, even Jesus. "I have written unto you, fathers," says the apostle, "because ye have known Him that was from the beginning." What conscious strength there is in thus having a single object, hardly ever practically attained, but through a process of unlearning. But that single object is the one object whom the Spirit of truth has been continually witnessing to in our souls as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end, the great end and center of the eternal counsels of the Godhead. This is the strength of old age. In the never-ceasing conflict, when the buoyancy of natural powers ceases, the warfare is carried on by a deeper sense of the power that worketh in us. Faith lives when the natural faculties are impaired. The soul of the aged disciple is true to Jesus where the powers of memory and recognition fail. He that "has borne from the belly, and carried from the womb," says, "And even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." By the presence of the Holy Ghost the Father and Son abide now in the soul of the believer; by the presence of the Holy Ghost believers can say, "Our conversation is in heaven." And thus "those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright." It is when the flesh is thoroughly crushed that we have strength with God and prevail. And thus, even as Caleb, the believer goes from strength to strength, mortifying the deeds of the body through the Spirit, at the same time that the abiding presence of the Spirit is the sure witness of the righteous judgment of God passed on the flesh in the cross of Christ, and the Spirit of revelation of heavenly and eternal realities, and of present communion with Him.

"If so be the Lord be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said." There is no doubt or uncertainty in this "if so be." It was only reckoning on the Lord's faithfulness to His promise, and on His ability to perform it, at the same time implying that this was his only ground of confidence. But with what confirmed confidence could he reckon on the Lord being with him, whose presence had been with him when he searched the land, and whose presence had been with him while traversing the wilderness: And is it not so with the believer now? Quickened by the Spirit when dead in trespasses and sins, he has known the same Spirit as revealing Jesus to his soul as the salvation of God. He knows the same Spirit as the abiding Comforter; glorifying Jesus, taking of His things and showing them unto the soul. He knows, by the presence of the same Comforter, that God hath called him unto His own kingdom and glory; and that same Spirit now shows to the soul what is the hope of God's calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Well may we use the words of one of old, and say, If there were any darkness or uncertainty as to the future, surely the Holy Ghost would not now "have showed us all these things, nor would He as at this time have told us such things as these."

The Danger of Prosperity

It may be, nay, it very often is so, that God's prosperings are attended with greater danger to our souls than are the devil's harassings.

We have an illustration of this in the concluding portion of this parenthetical history. In chapters 36, 37, the uncircumcised thunders at the gates of Jerusalem, Hezekiah is not dismayed. He sanctifies the Lord God of Israel in his heart, and in place of crying for being overcome is compassed about with songs of deliverance. With crippled Jacob "by his strength he has power with God." The letter of the invader, with all its boastings, all its threats, all its scoffs, all its revilings, is laid down quietly before the Lord; it has reached the right address, for the Lord declares concerning its writer, "I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against Me. Because thy rage against Me and thy tumult is come up into Mine ears, therefore [undertaking the answer] I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou earnest." As David, a "dead dog in his own eyes"; as Paul, in that time of trouble which came upon him in Asia; having the sentence of death in himself, in company with all those obtainers of a divine good report, of whom the world was not worthy, "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." This Israelite, indeed, takes hold of the strength of the mighty God of Jacob, "believes that He is," and so believing is upheld by the right hand of His righteousness. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God." The incensed waves of the strong and many waters of the Assyrian river have overflowed, and go over the land, whence is faith's expectation. "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I;" they toss themselves and foam, but they are broken and come to naught. The stretching forth of the wings in the breadth of the land, but the name of Immanuel is written upon that land. In the time of the flood, there is a standard; in the day of battle, a strong tower. "God is with us."

But the divine verdict is not merely that "flesh is grass;" it reads thus, "All flesh is grass." Are we prepared to acknowledge the truth of such a verdict? to believe that "there is no difference," that the God-fearing Hezekiah and the godless Assyrian differ nothing in nature the one from the other? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," this He has declared it to be, whose is the sole prerogative and the ability to search, it. The heart of a Sennacherib, coming out in undisguised blasphemy, without contradiction, is bad, unmixedly bad, desperately wicked; such flesh, cannot glory in God's presence. But there is a companion picture. The Holy Ghost would instruct us that the flesh in a Hezekiah is no better than the flesh in a Sennacherib. "No flesh shall glory." "As in water, face answereth to face, so does the heart of man to man"—not more like is the face that looks out of the water to the face that looks in, than is heart to heart.

Bright, and only bright, would have been the portrait of this saint, had the record closed here. Bright indeed it is; "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did. He removed the high places; and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and

brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not. He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchman to the fenced city.” (2 Kings 18:3-8) But then the Spirit of God is a faithful biographer; and the memoir He has furnished has its double instruction, its answer to both petitions, “Teach me what Thou art,” “Teach me what I am.” Hezekiah has been proving the Lord. We have now to look at him in other circumstances proving himself.

It is the hour of prosperity. The Lord by His favor has made his mountain to stand strong; the good hand of his God has wrought deliverance; riches flow in from every side; and the renown of his name is spread abroad. “Many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.” (2 Chron. 32:23) Popularity, a great name like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth, is the result of the faith that, in the sense of his own nothingness, had to do with God. Hezekiah’s history is in this respect no uncommon history. How many a saint has been lifted into a position of prominence before the eyes of his fellow saints, and before the world, through a course of unaffected simplicity of dependence, and of purpose of heart for God. Hezekiah “was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth;” yes; but, alas he was magnified also in his own sight. In all times of our prosperity let us say, “O Lord, hold Thou me up!”

“In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.... Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.” There is one who understands our case; and in the lights and shades of the life of faith the Physician is at work. What emptyings from vessel to vessel go on there to prevent a settling on our lees. We are “exceeding glad of the gourd.” But, such gladness is ephemeral. The leaves curl, the haulm shrivels; for the Lord God, who had prepared the gourd, has prepared a worm at the root of the gourd. Our gourd is withered.

Is there nothing answering to this in the history before us? “In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.” Yes, the worm is there.

We get a similar word addressed to one of whom there is mention in the gospel. The ground of a rich man had brought forth plentifully. According to human computation, he had much goods laid up for many years, and he thought within himself, I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I store my goods. I will say to my soul, Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry. But he was reminded that he was living, and reckoning, and boasting himself of the morrow apart from that God in whose hand his breath was. “Thou fool,” sounded in his ears, “this night thy soul shall be required of thee.”

These fingers of a man’s hand writing upon the plaster of the wall have their solemn instruction.

How does Hezekiah receive the message? What is its effect on this saint of God? “Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord.” (vs. 2) Could he have done better? The

man who in the strait of the siege betook himself to the temple in this time of his sickness, now that his feet can no longer tread the courts of the house of his God, bethinks himself, and turns, and makes supplication from his bed thitherward. "I have set the Lord always before me," is the language of faith. So far all is right. But we need look a little closer, and consider not simply the fact of his praying, but the character of his prayer. If the Lord is set before Hezekiah, Hezekiah is set before the Lord.

What is his cry? "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore." (vs. 3) He is calling on God to witness to his faithfulness, to the perfectness of his heart, to the goodness of his ways, to his jealousy against idolatry, to his diligence in restoring the feasts, and worship, and order of Israel. In the temple he had spread the letter with its blasphemies, now he spreads his graces before the Lord, and appeals to Him on the credit of them.

Will the Lord admit the plea He is not unrighteous to forget; He does not deny the truth of what Hezekiah says. He takes it at its worth, and tells him He will yet add fifteen years to his life. "Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah; saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father; I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years." (vss. 4, 5)

To a casual observer there might be nothing wonderful in this recovery of one who had been sick unto death. Such things are of daily occurrence. The proverb has it, "While there is life there is hope," and our infidel hearts deify means. But the sentence of death has gone forth from the mouth of the Lord, and it has taken hold; the faith of a Hezekiah can be only and nakedly in God. To Him to whom belongeth the issues of death, who turneth man to destruction, and saith, Return ye children of men, he looks in the hour of his sore sickness. The Lord that hath recovered him, and made him to live, he celebrates in the writing which he wrote when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness. The lump of figs laid as a plaster on the boil is but a lump of figs. If healing and health have flowed into his veins mediately through them, the breaker of the brazen serpent acknowledges that it is the God of the brazen serpent that has been at work. A wonder has been wrought in the land.

There is an accompanying wonder, the tidings whereof reach even to Babylon, "So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down." (vs. 8) The princes of Babylon may send to inquire about this wonder, and congratulate the king on whose behalf it has been wrought; but He whose hand is in both, who suspends not, nor reverses the action of the laws of nature, save in the accomplishment of His own counsels, has another field of inquiry for His saints. On the sick-bed of Hezekiah, no less than on the dial of Ahaz, God has put forth His power. "I will bring again the shadow of the degrees," "I will add unto thy days fifteen years." Faith owns this; but the secret of His ways has to be arrived at by the man of faith, not through inquiries in the world without, but through the discovery to himself of the world within.

"The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness: I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: He will cut me off with pining

sickness from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will He break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.” (vss. 9-14)

These bemoanings of a Hezekiah and other godly souls of old are so many preachings of much practical value to ourselves, as illustrating the deliverance wrought for us in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Death and life stand side by side in the “all things” that are ours. The keys of hell and death are in the hands of a risen, Lord. The grace of God, by which the Lord Jesus Christ tasted death, has triumphed in the stronghold of him who had the power of death, award of the judgment of God. But there is nothing of this in the scene before us. Darkness and dread, and the breaking up of earthly occupations, and ties, and hopes, press on the soul. There is no “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory,” for there is no such victory known. God is looked to, but it is for a present deliverance from death, and for prolonged life in the land. On what wondrous vantage ground is the simple believer in Jesus now set. For him, death is a thing behind, he has a life hidden with Christ in God. Christ is his life, and whilst he knows that when Christ shall appear, he shall appear with Him in glory, he is waiting for God’s Son from heaven, as his immediate and blessed hope. He may put off this mortal body if Jesus tarry, that is but a falling asleep, a being put to sleep by Jesus; he departs to be with Christ, which is far better, instead of being at home in the body, and absent from the Lord: absent from the body, he is present with the Lord. My reader, can you say, as in such a position, “I am always confident”? or are you, with many a bearer of the name of the risen One, still seeking the living among the dead?

To return to the writing— “What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt Thou recover me, and make me to live. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back. For the grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known Thy truth. The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.” (vss. 15-20)

The Lord has undertaken for him. He killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up. Such is the acknowledgment of Hezekiah. “Salvation is of the Lord.”

And mark, with the sense of this deliverance fresh upon his soul, the purpose of Hezekiah’s heart is not merely that of paying that which he has vowed in the presence of the Lord’s people, of sacrificing unto Him with the voice of thanksgiving: his thought is, that he shall bear along with him the remembrance of these days through all after life, that what man is and what death is, as he saw and felt about them then, will never be forgotten. But it is one thing to recognize the truth of these things with the face to the wall, one thing to have the strength and godliness of nature withered there and thus; and it is altogether another and a different thing, so to live in the continual sense of God’s presence, as to disallow every pretension of the flesh.

What resolutions, not insincere but formed in ignorance of self, are recorded in this memorandum of a convalescent Hezekiah. He who had thought to behold man no more with the inhabitants of

the world is about to enter afresh for a definite added term upon the scenes and activities of life, How will he carry himself in them? The dead and risen one will be altogether unlike his former self. His sins of the past forgiven, he starts afresh with settled purpose of heart that he will no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. Bearing about with him in all its wholesome bitterness the lesson of death, a living one, he, will be on the principle of a continuous gratitude, the worshipper and extoller of the Lord. Such is his settled purpose. Alas! it is built upon the "I shall" and "we will" of a sincere but self-ignorant heart. Ere the cock crow, this Old Testament Peter must be made to prove that his own "I will," like the "will not I" of the son of Jonas, is but big words. There is no "hold Thou me up" about it, and hence there is no stability.

The very next chapter brings before us a state of things entirely dissimilar from that of these good resolutions. It is again a time of prosperity; the sackcloth is put off, and the wearer of it is girded with gladness. Is the house in order? has God His own right place? The ambassadors of the king of Babylon have come, and Hezekiah's heart is "lifted up"; the man who was to go softly is a self-exalter. "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was one in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." (2 Chron. 32:31)

He has put God in remembrance of the perfectness of his heart, and God leaves him that he may know what that heart is. The ambassadors come: an opportunity is presented for magnifying the Lord, for making known the truth. What does he do? Then "Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not." He was glad of them: this explains it all. He calls them to examine his treasures; but God is calling him to the examination of his own heart. "I am king in Jerusalem," says that heart in its pride; just as another, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty? There is nothing of the dead man in all this, nothing of a going softly.

It needs but that we be left a little moment, so that we should be tried, in order to our knowing all that is in our hearts, and that which is in the heart comes out to our self-loathing. "He, that trusteth his own heart is a fool." That man may carry himself well and go through with the cheat until he makes his bow at the end who is the mere actor of a part, walking before his fellow men instead of before God. It may be a fair show that is made, though a fair show in the flesh. But the true-hearted saint, who knows what it is to wrestle and writhe through the onslaught of indwelling corruption, to detect the breaking out afresh of some old sore, the stealthy reviving of the viper long thought dead, finds his safety in a holding fast grace and keeping himself in the love of God.

To return to Hezekiah. We read in Chronicles that he "rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah." He humbles himself under the hand and word of the Lord. It is ever thus with one through grace true at bottom. The look that, while it brings sin to mind, assures us that He is unchanged in His love against whom that sin is, and that He has provided for it all, works

brokenness of spirit. "Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon. Then said he, What have they seen in thine house And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them. Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of hosts': Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." (vss. 3-7)

"Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days." (vs. 8) What a justifying of God in His ways have we here! However humbling the needed process through which His saints are put, the grace is pure that does it. Our profit is attained when, exercised through the discipline, we turn from self and from eyeing our graces to find in God our help.

Cain: His World and His Worship

It is a terrible history of man's hopelessness, the history God has given us in His Word (I say history, because we have a setting forth of his sins and failures from the beginning); but then the blessed grace of God is shown forth in it, because it tells of Christ.

It is not simply that man's heart is evil, that is true; but it has been proved evil in the presence of everything that ought to have restrained its evil. God has given us the history of man's ways and of His dealings with man; and in whatever way He has dealt with man, we find the evil of man's heart breaking out, and following its course, spite of all.

Man, having sinned against God, is turned out of Paradise. (Gen. 3) The next thing we read of is the outrageous wickedness of man against his brother—Cain, Adam's firstborn, slaying Abel. (Gen. 4) Then comes the flood, sweeping away a whole generation of evil-doers (Gen. 7); mercy shown to Noah (he and his house saved through the judgment). Immediately afterward we find him drunk in his tent, and Ham, his son, mocking and dishonoring him. (Gen. 9) God speaks to Israel at Sinai, thundering with His voice His righteous demands from man; yet, awful as the presence of God is (and even Moses said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake'), before Moses comes down from the mount, the people have made the golden calf, and broken the first link that binds them to the service of Jehovah. (Ex. 32) In the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ we see God visiting man in grace, dealing with sinners in grace, in the person of His Son—Him they slay and hang on a tree. (Acts 5:30; 10:39) Israel's history (man's under the most favorable circumstances) is one scene of violence and evil all the way through, so that Stephen, in testifying to them after their rejection of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost in witness of Christ's glory, says they were but doing as their fathers had ever done— "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." (Acts 7:51)

Notwithstanding all the dealings of God with man—the voice of God and the judgments of God—man is so hopelessly bad, that the nearer he is brought to God the more culture there is bestowed upon him by God, only the more is manifested, and that in darker characters, the sin and desperate wickedness of his heart working spite of all in sight even of God's judgments.

In the sin in the garden we get the character of man's evil as against God. Cain's sin is sin against a neighbor. Of course, both are sins against, God (all sin is against God); but whilst in the sin of Adam and Eve we see lust and disobedience, in Cain's there is something more, it is sin as exhibited against a neighbor.

Man, as to his actual condition, is a sinner cast out of Paradise, already out of the presence of God; and he ought to have the consciousness of being out, and that the only way of getting back to God is through His Son.

We are not in Paradise. We have got out of it some way or other; and we are in a world which is under judgment, and where death is staring us in the face. Adam had just been driven out of Paradise, and Cain must have had, through Adam, the remembrance that there was a time when

man was not out of Paradise, when he heard God's voice in the garden without fear, when he had not a bad conscience, and when he was without toil. Saints or sinners, in our own eyes, we have been driven out of Eden, and we are in the wilderness, utterly excluded from God's presence. We ought to have the consciousness of being out, and of the misery of our condition; but, alas! we have lost all remembrance of the place in which we once were, and have become familiarized to the ruin and desolation consequent upon sin. Still it is true, and we cannot deny it, that we have got out of Paradise, and are in a world constantly under judgment. We may try to make the best of the world, but we must all feel that something has come in, something that has brought in death and judgment. Happiness cannot be associated with sin any more than sin can be associated with God. As for man, though he seeks to buoy himself up with his sins, and to delude himself with the lie of Satan, sink he must, sooner or later, under the power of the sin and death that has come in. He is just spending his energies to make the world pleasant without God, and himself comfortable and rich in it, to die out of it.

The world he cannot keep. He may build a city for himself, as Cain did (vs. 17), and call it after his own name (Cain called his city after the name of his son), but it will be with him, as David speaks, "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honor abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them." (Psa. 49)

Cain did not like the sense of the wrath of God lying upon him. Gone out from the presence of the Lord (vs. 16), he had become so great in the earth that he could build a city. Man never likes to be in the truth of his condition. Cain likes not to be "a fugitive and a vagabond," and he tries to build a city, and he does build a city, in the endeavor to make the world as pleasant as he can without God. It might be said, What harm was there in building a city? In the first place there would never have been the necessity for this in Paradise. Moreover, it was a proof of insensibility as to his sin against God; it showed quiet contentment under the effect of that punishment which at first he had felt was greater than he could bear; it was the last expression of total alienation of heart and affection from God.

Driven out from the presence of God, he sets about to establish himself. He seeks for himself a home, not with God in heaven, but on the earth, from which God had pronounced him "cursed!" He makes himself master of a city here God had made him "a vagabond."

And mark, further, the faculty man has of making himself happy in his estrangement from God. We find amongst the family of Cain, not only "the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle " (vs. 20), but "the father of such as handle the harp and the organ" (vs. 21), and the "instructor of every artificer in brass and iron" (vs. 22). Now, there is nothing wrong in working brass and iron, neither is there any harm in sweet sounds (we read in the Book of Revelation of harpers in heaven); but what Cain was doing was this, he was making the world pleasant without God. These are the efforts of man, who has settled himself down in a world where judgment has placed him, and who is trying to make himself as happy and the world as pleasant as he can, without God, till death and judgment overtake him. If I saw a man who had committed some wicked crime against his father, the next hour playing on musical instruments, should I say there was no harm in that?

Such was Cain's world. And is it not like your world? Is there any difference between your world and Cain's world? Is it a better world because God's Son has been crucified in it? Has that act on the part of man made it more acceptable to God, because that has happened since the days of Cain? Where is the difference? They had their "harps and organs," and so have you. They had their "artificers in brass and in iron," and so have you. It was Cain's world then, away from God; and it is Cain's world still! The like tree produces like fruit. Man is carrying on the world by himself, and for himself, endeavoring to keep God out of sight, as much as possible to do without God, lest God should get at his conscience, and make him miserable.

You may object that you are not without God, that you are called by the name of Christ, are Christians, and have a "religion" also. Cain had a "religion." He was a religious man; as religious as Abel. But he had no love to God; he had no faith. He was a religious man, but not a godly man.

It is a strange introduction to this picture, the setting forth of Cain as a worshipper, and a worshipper moreover of the true God. We read: "And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." (vs. 2, 3)

There is no mention made of false gods before the flood. Cain was a worshipper of the one living and true God. Soon after the flood there were idolaters, and then God called out a separate people as witnesses of His character, to make good His name and grace. But there is not any mention made of false gods before Joshua 24:6-8, "Your fathers worshipped other gods," a fresh crime, a fresh snare of the enemy, which called for new measures on the part of God. Satan had come and slipped himself in between man and God, and was the one that was really worshipped, though under the name of gods; and the call of Abram was the call and witness of "the Most High God."

Your "artificers in brass and iron" are worshippers of the true God. So was Cain.

And he took some pains too. He offered that which he had been toiling for in "the sweat of his brow." He was a "tiller of the ground," and he "brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord. He did not bring that which cost him nothing. (2 Sam. 24:24) Nay, his worship cost more of toil than that of Abel. He came in the way of nature, offering the fruit of his toil and labor. And you have done the same. This is ever the character of false worship. Religiousness does not take a man out of the character of Cain; it rather brings him into it; so that you have not got one step in that way out of the character God has marked as that of CAIN.

Observe, I do not charge you with being hypocrites, for I do not say that Cain was not sincere. There is no doubt indeed of his sincerity; but then his sincerity only evidenced the blind-hardness of his heart. Human sincerity means nothing, it is often but the greatest proof of the desperate darkness in which a man is. Those were sincere of whom Christ said, "He that killeth you will think he doeth God service." Saul of Tarsus was thoroughly sincere when he "thought" he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He consulted moreover the chief priests and elders, the religious authorities of the day. He was zealous for his religion, and thoroughly sincere as a man, but totally blind as to God and the things of Christ, thinking to do God service by fighting against and slaying His saints. Cain, in his sincerity, brought to the Lord that which cost him something, that which was the fruit of his toil. He came to God as a worshipper, and in so doing offered to God that which he had brought honestly as a man, but which proved him to be

ignorant of his state as a sinner.

What, then, is man to hope for? you will say. He is to hope for nothing. Did he not get out of Paradise because of sin? What possible ground can he have as a sinner for hoping to get into heaven? What ground had Cain for hoping that God would accept either himself or his offering? God had driven man out of Paradise because of sin, What ground had he to expect by the works of his hands to get back into the presence of God? You may say, It was not the works of his hands, but the fruits of God's creation. But what would you think of the man who was hoping to get into heaven by offering his corn and his wine to God, supposing, like Simon Magus (Acts 8), that the gift of God may be bought? Why, it would show that his conscience was as hard as the nether millstone, utterly insensible to the condition he was in, as well as to the character of God. The very worship of Cain proved the desperate, utter insensibility of his heart to the judgment of God against sin, and to those mighty things which had just happened, the effects and consequences of which he was now experiencing.

How came man to be toiling there in the sweat of his brow? Their very toil told the tale of the curse. They had been driven out of Eden for sin. But in Cain we see utter recklessness to the judgment of God. He had forgotten the very nature and being of that God who had set man perfectly happy in the garden, at the first, to keep it, and to enjoy its fruits (fruits yielded to his hand without toil or labor); and supposed that, by toil and labor (the judicial consequences of sin), he could produce something that God would accept. There was utter, desperate recklessness as to the judgment of God.

Cain's worship was the worst thing he did. It was, in fact, the denying that he had sinned. Such blindness to what he had been, such hardness of conscience, in supposing that he could get into the presence of God in his sins as if nothing at all had happened! Such wretched, assumption, that because he was a "tiller of the ground," tilling of the ground was all right! But how came it to be all right? Because God had cursed the ground. He, a defiled sinner, driven out of Paradise, brings "of the fruit of the ground," which the Lord had cursed, "an offering to the Lord;" that is, he brings into the presence of God the sign and seal of the sin that had driven him out from God!

And how comes a man to be going Sunday after Sunday, as he says, to "worship God"? What is all this toil? to "make peace with God?" God is "the God of peace;" He "preaches peace," a made peace, through "the blood of the cross;" yet man goes on, seeking to carry something into God's presence as "a duty," "to make peace," without once asking about God's way of peace.

Cain was a worshipper of God; but there was no faith in Cain. There was no faith to recognize his own ruin and sin, no faith to apprehend the judgment of God against sin, he had no business in the presence of God as he was, no title to be a worshipper of God. He had not a bit of faith to recognize his own condition as driven out of Paradise, his sin and estrangement from God, or that blood, death, was necessary in order for him to approach God.

That is just the world's worship, and are you any the better for it? Are you any the nearer to God?

Tell me, dear friends, what if God does not receive your worship? Suppose that, after all your well-doing and toil for God, God rejects it—for that is what Cain's toiling met with from God: "Unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect" (vs. 5)—would you be content?

How was it with Cain? “Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell.” And it is ever thus. The moment God puts man on the true ground of his condition before Him, the enmity of the natural heart breaks out against God. Cain was “very wrath,” exceeding angry. And why? Because his heart was opposed to grace. He had not owned the first principle of sin in the presence of God.

And you, when the sovereign grace of, the gospel comes to you, are “very wrath.” What, a man do his best, you exclaim, and not be accepted! So thought Cain. And so thinks every man naturally; that is, he thinks that God must accept him just as well as he accept God, bringing down God to his own measure of holiness. And then the wrath of man breaks out, and he rejects the righteousness that God holds out to him; he will not have His Son.

There is not a principle in Cain that is not found in you. There is no evil in brass and iron, nor is there any harm in sweet sounds. The evil and the sin is in this, that men are using these things to hide God from them. If you are worshippers of the true God, so was Cain. We may put a terrible name on that which we see in Cain, and yet approve of the same thing in ourselves. The light tells us that was sin in Cain, which the spirit of self-love tells us is not sin in our own case. What difference is there between you and Cain? Take the Bible, and see if you can make out any difference. The only real difference is this, that you have a farther and more developed knowledge of “the seed of the woman” (Christ), and therefore, that of the two, you are the more guilty.

Having sinned against God, abused His goodness, and refused His Son, man turns to please himself as if nothing had happened. It is more terrible to a spiritual eye to see insensibility after sin has been committed; it is a far deeper shade of sin than even the commission of the crime. The returning of a soul to God is just in the being awakened to a sense of the awfulness of this state.

There is yet another feature in the Cain character—open hostility to those who know God’s principle of grace, to those whom God does accept. See what follows: “And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.” (vs. 8) Abel, as a poor helpless man, should have demanded Cain’s sympathy; but Cain hates the one whom God delights in.

And so it is now. Why is it that you are so angry at a fault in a Christian, which you readily excuse in a man of the world, if it be not hatred to the name he bears? If it ought to produce better fruits in him, why not adopt it yourselves? If you are expecting better from him than from the world, why not follow that which you profess to believe will produce the better fruit?

But you have not merely hated the name of Christ, you have been guilty of hating that which God has stablished in Christ. And here is the same principle that crucified Christ, the desperate recklessness of sin.

You cannot deny that the world has crucified Christ. God’s Son is not now in the world. He has been in the world. He became a man amongst men: “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14) Man saw and hated Him, and summed up his evil in killing Him. I ask you, therefore, Has God no such question with you as He had with Cain, “Where is thy brother?” (vs. 9) And is not God demanding of the world, Where is Christ? Cain replied, “I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Here is a much worse character of sin than Adam's. It is the haughtiness and recklessness of sin. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Not only has there been sin against God—sin that has exiled man from Eden, and separated him from the presence of God—but there has been sin also, that has led to the hatred and destruction of a brother (blessed and perfect in His ways), whom man has seen. Your disclaiming this displays and is the proof of the recklessness of your hearts. "If I had not come and spoken unto them," said Jesus, "they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth Me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause." (John 15:22-25)

The coming of the Son of God into the world has shown the real state it is in.

Why was Christ rejected by man, except that man hated God? That was the only reason that Christ was slain in this world. They hated God, and therefore they hated Him. They hated the Light. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, either cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd... But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (John 3:20, 21) "They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." And this is their sin, that they have put the Light out of the world. Like Cain, they were "of that wicked one, and slew" their "brother." (1 John 3:12) Like him, too, in the motive. "And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (John 8:46) Even Pilate said, "I find no fault in Him." (John 18:38; 19:4, 6) The world has sinned against God in crucifying and slaying Jesus. They hated God, and therefore turned God's Son out of the world when sent to it in love.

But there is another thing. It is not simply a question of man's having killed the Lord Jesus Christ; the world has now to answer for its resistance of the Holy Ghost. "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." The testimony of the Holy Ghost, present in the world as witness of the glory of Christ, is a conviction of the world of sin. (John 16:7-15) He has been sent down since Christ has been glorified. The necessary testimony of His very presence in the world is this, He would not have been here on earth if Christ had not been killed. He is come in condemnation of the whole world before God. I am here, He says, as it were, because you have killed your Abel. It is not a question about particular sins. You have killed God's Son; you are a sinner, because you have not believed on Him.

Well then, dear friends, are you the daily companions of those who have rejected Christ, who have killed Christ? Are you of that world, and found with that world in its pleasures and profits, its religion and its lusts, that has done this, and that is still against God and against His Christ, vainly trying to make yourselves pleasant without God? or have you taken your stand with those who are "of God," who have God with them and God for them, though the whole world that lieth in the wicked one be against them. The efforts that are being made merely to improve the world are but the sign of the insensibility of Cain. The Spirit of God is come into the world to awaken us to a sense of what has happened in the world, and of the truth of our condition as men.

How came poor Abel to be an accepted worshipper "And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain," (vs. 4) He was accepted by blood. There was this testimony in his offering, I cannot go to

God as I am; I am driven out of Paradise; sin has come in between me and God, and death, “the wages of sin,” must come in between me and God or I cannot go to God—I cannot go as I am. He took the place of a sinner, and put in faith between himself and God, the blood of a victim that had been slain. Unless in his going to God he had owned his necessity that he could not get into the presence of God at all but by blood he would not have been accepted any more than Cain. But he knew and owned that he could not get to God without blood; he was of faith, and faith ever sees that “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” (Heb. 9:22) He put death, judicially inflicted death, by slaying the victim, between himself and God, and then he comes into the presence of God as an accepted worshipper. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” (Heb. 11:4)

But further, Abel suffered with Christ. Having owned that he could not come into the presence of God without the blood of the Lamb slain, he takes his place and portion with Christ in rejection. He is a sufferer from the wicked of the world. That is how it must end. That is all that the Christian is to expect at the hands of a world departed from God. “Marvel not if the world hate you.” (1 John 3:13)

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest,” says the apostle, “by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near,” (Heb. 10:19-22). All who come not through Him are rejected, because they do not know that they are so utterly sinful that they cannot come into God’s presence except through the blood of His Son. And, on the other hand, all who say I cannot go up except through blood, see that it is the perfectness of love—God’s own perfect blessed love, that to meet man’s need spared nothing, not even his only-begotten Son; “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.” (2 Cor. 5:21) This is the language of faith. He is the only God who, when I was a lost sinner, gave His Son to die for me. I know of no God but a God of perfect love bringing me out of all my vileness, as did the father to the returning prodigal (Luke 15), and bringing me into His house to rejoice with Him in the exceeding riches of His grace.

We get perfect blessed peace through the blood of Christ, without one pang of conscience left. The worshipper once purged, has no more conscience of sin.” (Heb. 10) The apostle does not say that he is not a sinner, that he is not vile: but that God has so loved the vile and sinful as to give His Son unto death to wash away their vileness and their sins.

O Joyful Day!

O joyful day! O glorious hour!
When Jesus by Almighty power
Revived and left the grave;
In all His work behold Him great,
Before, Almighty to create,
Almighty now to save.
The first-begotten from the dead,
He's risen now, His people's Head,
And thus their life's secure;
And if, like Him, they yield their breath,
Like Him they'll burst the bonds of death,
Their resurrection sure.
Why should His people then be sad?
None have such reason to be glad
As those redeem'd to God;
Jesus, the mighty Savior, lives;
To them eternal life He gives,
The purchase of His blood.
Then let our gladsome praise resound,
And let us in His work abound,
Whose blessed name is Love;
We're sure our labor's not in vain,
For we with Him ere long shall reign
With Jesus dwell above.

Deliverance From Under the Law

In our relationship to God, there are two points of primary importance for us to remark: our responsibility as men, and the power of that life in which we live before Him Both these were set forth to us by God in the garden of Eden, in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and in the tree of life. First, as to our responsibility. Man has become a sinner; consequently he has in him no spiritual life at all. (John 6:53) Sin brought in death and condemnation. After the fall, God gave the law by Moses, in order to prove the state of man. The law of God must exact righteousness, according to the nature of him to whom it is given; but the law does not give life. (Gal. 3:21) It is the very nature of the law to exact and not to give. Since it is the question of righteousness in man, God cannot lower the requirements of the law, and if we have the divine nature, we shall not desire its requirements to be lowered. The law is the measure of responsibility of the natural man, but it does not give life, and (because man is a sinner) the law, instead of being a resource, becomes the cause of death and condemnation. A mixture of law and grace, in so far as this last is found working in us, does not change this state. Grace does not destroy our responsibility, and that which the law requires is not fulfilled. Christ came to be our Savior and our Deliverer; He is the source of life to those who believe; He bare, upon the cross, their sins and the wrath of God which they deserved. But this is not all; in the person of this Savior, Man enters into a new position; He is the Man who is risen and glorified before God. The righteousness of God is accomplished in Him, and He has received that glory as a reward. Let us now see how we are made partakers of this amazing position before God.

God cannot endure sin. The responsibility of the creature cannot be destroyed. At the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle exposes the condition of sin under which both Jews and Gentiles are. Without law, man is without restraint (ungodly), debased by sin; has lost every right thought about God, being given up to things not even suitable to man in nature. Under the law, he not only has corrupted himself, through his lusts, but he is disobedient by reason of his own will, a transgressor. The law condemns not only sin, but also the sinner. The Savior appears, born of a woman, and under the law; He shed His blood in order to purify us before God—to justify the sinner before God—the just Judge. Grace, rich and deep, is also presented to us in this work. It is the instruction of the epistle (to the Romans) down to the end of the third chapter.

In the 4th chapter he begins to examine another truth, the effect and the result of the resurrection of Christ. In the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters we have the effects of this truth; and in the 8th chapter the result in full.

The history of Abraham is introduced in the fourth chapter. If the Jew found himself condemned by the law, he could fall back upon the relationship God had established between Himself and Abraham. It was to this end that the apostle set forth what were the foundations of this relationship, and showed it was built upon faith and the promise. Righteousness was by faith, and it was given to Abraham before he was circumcised—“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” There is yet another principle taught us in this chapter. Abraham was as

dead, as also was Sarah his wife. But God had promised to him a seed. Abraham did not doubt His word because of the impossibility to man of the thing, but he believed in the power of God, whose part it was to fulfill His own promise, and that was counted to him for righteousness.

And so it is with us; only with this most remarkable difference, we do not believe that God is able to fulfill His promises, but that He has fulfilled them. "We believe in God, who has raised up from the dead our Lord Jesus." Observe, the apostle does not say here: We believe in Him who is raised, but in Him who has raised. It is thus that he teaches us the meaning of this doctrine. In the resurrection, God does not present Himself as the just Judge, satisfied as such by the work of Christ; but He acts according to His own power in the sphere of death's power, in bringing forth His beloved Son from under it, and bringing us now, in Christ, into a new position where death and sin are not. It is God who works for us, to save us perfectly, and to set us before Him in truth and in righteousness (man being dead as to that which concerns spiritual life, and living in sin as to natural life); but in Christ he has died and risen again, and finds his place before God in grace, where sin is taken away and righteousness is accomplished: "He was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."

From the 5th to the 8th chapter is the application of this truth to our own condition. In the 5th chapter, to our justification; in the 6th, to the new life of the believer in Jesus; in the 7th, to the law; and the 8th describes a soul in perfect liberty.

In the 5th chapter, he shows that the believer enjoys peace with God; that he lives in the sense of God's favor, being heir of His glory, and rejoicing even in tribulations which work for his spiritual good. Much more, he rejoices in God Himself, who is his source of endless joy.

The apostle is not here speaking of the all-important motive which the believer finds in the blood of Christ to cause him to cease from sin, nor of the power which he finds in the love of God; but he shows that he cannot live in sin to which he is dead. The Christian becomes partaker of the fruits of the work of Christ, because He is dead and risen. How can he live in sin, being already dead to sin? A dead man does not live. He is not a partaker of the blessing which is in Christ, if he has not the life of Christ. Though, as to the natural life, he is still living in the world, he ought nevertheless to reckon himself as dead to sin, since he lives by the life of Christ who is dead and risen.

In the 7th chapter, he considers the consequences of the same truth as to the law. The law, he says, has dominion over a man so long as he liveth; he then gives the tie of marriage as an explanation of it. As long as the first husband lives, the wife cannot be to another man, without guilt. The first husband then represents the law; the second is Christ raised from the dead (Christ when living on this earth was Himself under the law); and thus we cannot be at the same time under the law and united to Christ raised from the dead. However, it is not the law which dies, but Christ died under the law; for as many as have sinned under the law shall be condemned by the law; and the law is good, if a man use it lawfully. (Rom. 2:12; 1 Tim. 1:8,9) If it was ourselves who were dead under the law, we should be lost; but Christ died for us, and because He is risen from the dead our souls are united to Him, the law having no longer a hold over a dead man. Therefore, now, Christ, He who is raised from the dead, is our only husband. Thus the resurrection of Christ has delivered us from the law, as well as from sin and condemnation.

The 5th chapter of Romans, then, shows us our position in Christ, the second Adam who is risen. The 6th, our new life in Him, a life of which the strength lies in reckoning ourselves dead to sin; the 7th is our complete deliverance from the law, which hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth. As to us, we are dead and risen in Him. It is the new man in Christ which bears fruit unto God, and not the old man under the law. Yet the fault is not in the law; but, because sin is in the flesh, the effect of the law is to bring home guilt upon the conscience, and to become an occasion for exciting the desire to sin.

But to return to the leading subject of the chapter, we see that we cannot be at the same time under the law and with Christ risen. This would be to have two husbands at once. In the second half of the chapter we are given the experience of one who wants to fulfill the righteousness of the law, and to bring forth fruit to God as standing under the law—the first husband. Awakened by God, and under the influence of the new life, he understands the spirituality of the law; he understands its requirements; he desires to keep the law, and his conscience cannot be satisfied unless he does so. The new nature loves the righteousness of the law; but by reason of the opposition of the flesh, it does not fulfill it. (7:14, 16, 22) Sad state of a soul, which, by reason of grace working in it, desires to do good; but because it is under the law, knows not how to do it. Now, let it be observed, that while in this state the soul is in its relationship with the first husband, and, consequently, has nothing to do with the second. We have seen that no one can have two husbands at once, therefore in this passage there is no mention made either of Christ or of the Holy Spirit. It is the ordinary Christian experience of the spirituality of the law—which we meet with. The conscience of the individual being renewed, knows that it cannot fulfill the requirements of that spiritual law. The renewed will makes every possible effort to do so, but it cannot succeed. All the while it loves the spiritual nature of the law; it does not desire that it should be less perfect. It knows that God cannot give up His authority nor lower His holiness. It tries with all its might to attain the end; but it has no power. The law demands perfect obedience; the conscience and the will assent; but the law gives no power: the end will never be attained. The awakening of the conscience in one who is sincere never produces in him the accomplishment of righteousness, but, on the contrary, despair. It is much more difficult to know and acknowledge that we cannot do a single good thing, than to know and acknowledge that we have sinned. The experience which the soul passes through under the law is a means of convincing it of its powerlessness; but holiness cannot be a subject of indifference, either to God or to the newborn soul; and as we find that we cannot work out righteousness, we are obliged to seek deliverance elsewhere. Yet, though God will convince a soul that is sincere of its powerlessness, He takes no pleasure in leaving it in this wretched state; but as soon as it acknowledges its state, and that it is and knows itself to be without any hope in itself, so that it can never attain to the righteousness of the law, then God reveals to it its perfect deliverance in Christ. Then at once the soul gives thanks to God for what He has done for it; it sees where its new place is in Christ risen—its true husband, that it may bring forth fruit unto God. (vss. 24, 25) Henceforth, it is not only a new position (in Christ risen) which is its position, but also strength and liberty. The flesh is there still, its nature is not changed; but our position before God is in the Spirit, and not in the flesh. The power of the Spirit is present, livingly in us, so that we walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Christ in heaven is the expression of our true position before God, Christ living upon the earth is the representation and example of the heavenly man upon earth. Walking after the Spirit, we fulfill the law (by loving God and our neighbor), because we are not under the law.

The close of the 25th verse is brought in by the Holy Spirit, in order to show us that, though we are seen in perfect liberty, the nature of the flesh is not changed; but the law (which means here a principle acting always in the same way)—the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus—has completely set us free from the law of sin and death, which reigns in the old man. In Christ we live in the new man: there the old man has no right; but the Holy Spirit is the power which works in it. As to the question of righteousness, the Christian is in perfect peace, because he knows that God, instead of condemning him, has done what the law could not do; that is, “condemned sin in the flesh,” by means of Christ come in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as the atoning sacrifice for sin. A soul who is earnest will always mourn more over the sin which he finds working in him, than on account of the sins already committed; but he knows that Christ has died in his stead, not only for sins but for sin itself. So, then, in the 8th chapter we see Christ as the sacrifice upon the cross, then alive in resurrection, and then the blessed testimony, as the living power of the Holy Spirit is fully unfolded to us.

From the 5th to the 11th verse of this chapter, the Holy Spirit is declared to be the character and the power of the life. From the 12th to the 27th, He is in us, the personal witness of our adoption and of our right of inheritance, and the helper of our infirmity. From the 28th verse to the end of the chapter, the Holy Spirit is proving that God is not only working in us, but much more He is for us, in His own power and faithfulness, so that the happy believer is assured that nothing can separate him from the love of God—a love which he knows by the Holy Spirit which dwells in him.

The height of the glory, the depth of humiliation in death, are in Christ the proof and the means of our being everlastingly blessed in the presence of God Himself; in the blessedness which grace has given us.

But there is still more instruction to be drawn out of the third verse of the eighth chapter. The three first verses are a summing up of the three preceding chapters, and three things are taught us in them. 1st. The position of the guilt of man when considered in the light of responsibility. The answer to this is his being justified by God. This is the subject of the fifth chapter. 2nd. The nature of the old man and that of the new is the subject of the sixth chapter. 3rd. God, in order to put to the proof the ability of man to work out righteousness for Himself, brought in the law, and man, through the fall, being a sinner, could not fulfill righteousness. Even before he was a sinner, when his obedience was put to the proof by a law, it became the occasion of his fall. But when, by means of the new birth, he understands the spirituality of the law, then he knows, not only that he has committed sins, but that the law of sin is in his members. This is the subject examined by the Holy Spirit in the seventh chapter.

The power and the nature of the new life in Christ, who has died and is risen from the dead, is the answer of God's grace to the wickedness of the flesh. This is taught us in the sixth chapter. The soul set free, through fully knowing the work of God in Christ, is the answer of grace to the experiences of the seventh chapter. By considering attentively the three first verses of the eighth chapter, it will be easily seen that the first verse corresponds to the fifth chapter, the second to the sixth, and the third to the seventh. The sixth and seventh chapters are closely connected, because the soul that is born again finds out the true character of the old man by means of the law. We have, then, the summing up of these two chapters in the second and third verses of the eighth chapter. All hope of deliverance is shown in the fifth chapter to flow out of justification. But this is

not man's thought. He would wish to deliver himself actually from the law of sin by his own effort, and thus be without fault before God; but God will not have it so, and it never could be according to His truth, because that, on one hand, the work of Christ would have been in vain, and, on the other, man would not have known what is the true nature and sinfulness of sin. If, by efforts in the conscience, we could find deliverance before God, the work of justification, though it might not be by strength of man, would, at least, be by the work of the Holy Spirit, and not by the work of Christ. But God will not, and for man it is impossible to have it so, because the work of the Spirit of God is to show him how intolerable sin is to God, and that the nature of man is not changed. Now his very nature is sin. Man must submit himself to the righteousness of God. Convinced of sin, condemned by the law, he must find his righteousness in another—in Christ, who died for him, and is now risen and in the presence of God. This is the reason why the third and the fifth chapters of the epistle come before the sixth and seventh, and the first verse of the eighth chapter before the second and third verses.

After the Holy Spirit has described the conflicts of the soul that is born again, and shown its helplessness, then the "there is no condemnation" (8:1) is the first want of the soul and the beginning of God's answer to it, in His Grace. But because we have this privilege—"no condemnation"—in a risen Christ, this does not separate from life, and cannot be separated from it; so it is not simply a doctrine, upon a particular subject, expressing the thoughts of God; but it is a change in what passes in the soul within, a change wrought through the knowledge of this subject, by means of faith. The soul has learned its own helplessness by means of the law; the law of God has discovered to it the law of sin that is in the members; the man sees the sin that dwells in him; he hates it, but he cannot deliver himself from it.

Whilst we are upon this subject of the law, it ought to be remarked before going further, that there are some who make a law of Christ Himself. They acknowledge His love; they see in His work on the cross how great is His love. They find in it a reason why they should love Christ perfectly with their whole hearts, but they cannot find this love in themselves. They ought to love Christ with their whole heart, but they do not love Him thus. Now it is precisely the law which commands that we should love God with all our heart. We have found in Christ a new motive; we have, perhaps, given a new form to the law, but we find ourselves still under the law, though we have clothed it with the name of Christ. The power of sin is still there; it prevents us from fulfilling the law, which requires that we should love with the whole heart. Sin is in the flesh—it harasses me, and gets the better of me. Where can I look for deliverance from this terrible and skillful adversary? Our very helplessness is our resource. We find that God Himself must come in, because we can do nothing. No sooner have I understood the work of God (not the promises), than I find that God Himself has done the whole work. This is what is meant by the third verse; God Himself has met and conquered the evil which was always too much for me; Christ, who knew no sin, having been made sin for us, has taken away not only the sins which we have actually committed, but also sin in the flesh, in the presence of God, because He died not only for sins, but also for sin.

In this the love of God has been revealed to us, that Christ came into the world when we were nothing but sinners; but this revelation of His love does not purify the conscience. Moreover, so long as the conscience is not purified, the heart cannot rejoice in His love, because doubt in the conscience causes fear, and this prevents the heart from resting with confidence on His love. It is most true that love is in God, but the heart cannot make this love its own, because conscience tells

us that God cannot bear sin.

The Holy Spirit who speaks of love in the gospel, speaking by the same word is also light to convince of sin, and this convincing brings home to the heart not only sin committed but sin as in itself. A child may be convinced of his father's love, but he fears to meet him if his conscience tells him he has done anything wrong—"Fear hath torment." But if we are risen with Christ, not only is it true that God has loved us in our state of sin, but he has also raised us up into quite a new position—into the same position as Christ is in Himself before God, where we ourselves are the result of the mighty power of God, according to the power by which He raised up Christ from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. (Eph. 1:9-23; 2 Cor. 5:5)

The manifestation of the love of God in Christ whilst we were yet sinners, is recalled to our attention in 1 John 4:9, but our perfect position in Christ, by being made partakers of His life, is set forth in the seventeenth verse of the same chapter. Now Christ came into this position after having entirely finished His work, a work by which the conscience is purified, and thus love is shed abroad without hindrance in the heart. Because I am united to Christ who has died and is risen again for me, sin can no more be imputed to me than it can be imputed to Christ; His position before God is quite the same as mine, and, let us remember, it is a solemn thought; to have any other position would be nothing short of damnation. There is no middle place between the first and second Adam; we well know that Christ's position now before God is without sin—not only as to the perfection of His person (which was always perfect), but besides as it regards the imputation of sin. What then? Has God become indifferent to sin? Did Christ do nothing as to it? Did He shrink back on account of the difficulty of the work? Did He claim at His Father's hand twelve legions of angels to deliver Him, or did He follow the counsel of the chief priests by saving Himself as He had so often saved others? No! we know it well; He is the Head, without sin, of those who believe on Him, because as the One who has stood in their stead He has made an end with sin upon the cross, and having finished this work, He has united them to Himself by a new life which flows from Him, and by the power of the Holy Spirit which has made them, one with Him. And now what does this truth say as to believers? Not only did Christ bear our sins upon the cross, but He was there personally our substitute before God. For all that which the Holy Ghost now shows us as sin before God in the light of His countenance, for all that Christ died upon the cross, and He has borne it for us. He is Himself in the presence of God, judged of according to the light of His glory; He is there who knew no sin, yet who was made sin for us. Now, thanks be to God, all is over—the work is accomplished.

The cloud whence the lightning of God's judgment came forth, the tempest of His wrath, has passed away, taking out of the way our sin, and now the sunshine of God's love rests on us without a cloud—that perfect love which gave Jesus to finish the work. The conscience is purified according to the holiness of God, who has Himself judged the sin.

Before this, though God sent the law among men, yet He Himself was hidden from them; but the same stroke which tore the veil, so that God was revealed in His holiness, has at the same moment taken away the sin which forbids our standing before His unveiled face. The full light (for the true light has now shined) which shines around us, and in which we are, shows that we are without sin before the face of God; and that our garments are washed in the blood of the Lamb. The nearer we are to the light, the more clearly will our perfect purity before God be seen.

It is thus, then, that what the law could not do, because it condemned the sinner without being able to change the flesh, God has done, because Christ has not only borne our sins, but has come in the likeness of sinful flesh, and become the sacrifice for sin. Thus God has condemned sin in the flesh. Let this be particularly noticed; it is not said: Sin shall be condemned as a thing that is yet to be done, neither is it by the power of the Holy Spirit, but it is by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Christ has given Himself up as the atoning sacrifice for the sin of which the Holy Spirit has convinced thee, O believer. God has condemned the sin which has been thy constant sorrow; but He has condemned it on the cross of Christ; He has taken it away, and thou art free. Thou hatest it—it cannot be otherwise, if the Holy Spirit is at work in thee. Now it is no more imputed to thee than are the other sad fruits borne by this corrupt tree. Thou art before God, in Christ, in whom sin has been condemned on the cross.

Now, as regards holiness, what is the effect of this truth? What have we to say of the position of the believer? He is set in the light, even before the face of God. He has a life which rejoices in this light; he has the Holy Spirit to enjoy it. Holiness is measured by this light. Since we are in the presence of God, all things shall be judged according to the perfection of His presence. "We have communion with the Father and with the Son." Therefore, when the apostle speaks of sin (in Rom. 3:23), he does not say, "We have sinned, and we have come short of what men ought to do," but "we have come short of the glory of God." And because we are set on the ground of grace, it is not merely that holiness is expected from us, but we are made partakers of HIS holiness; and not only so, but because God is for us, we find power to realize in our life this setting apart to Him; and because we know He is for us, we have the assurance that He will give us this power when we draw near to Him. Holiness is realized by communion with God; but with the conscience of sin, communion is impossible. Where shall we find strength for practical separation to God, unless in God Himself? How can we ourselves walk in this practical holiness if we have not His strength? How can I seek this strength from God if I have not the assurance that He is for me, and if my conscience prevents me from approaching Him? Efforts made after holiness may be sincere before the soul is set at liberty, because the tendencies of the new life are there; but such efforts are, always mixed up with the felt need of justification, and thus the true nature of holiness is overthrown and lost, or, rather, it has never been known. As to our rule of life, in accordance with our position of being in Christ, it is His life on earth which is our model. "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked." These two things were seen in Him He was the righteous man before God, and before man He was the revelation of God's character. Such ought also to be our life upon earth; walking in the presence of God, we ought to manifest His character before men. And the reason for this is, because Christ Himself is already our life; as the apostle says, "That the life of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal flesh." And herein is the important difference between the law and the commands of Christ. The law promises life if we fulfill its commands. The commands of Christ, as with all His words and works, are the expression of the course of that life which we possess already in Him. And what were the principles of this life in Christ Himself? First, He could say, "The Son of Man which is in heaven." It was love from which all His service flowed. Even as man, He was born of God; and He could say of Himself, that for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, and despised the shame. The same thing is true of us, with this necessary difference, which there must be, because of His glorious person, for He is God Himself. United to Him, our life is hid with Him in God.

Then as to our life on earth as believers, it begins with our being born of God. The love of God in our hearts is the spring of our walk; and the glory in Christ, which is set before us, strengthens us in all the sufferings of our pilgrimage on earth; and, moreover, there is the power of the Holy Spirit, by whose fullness He lived and acted whilst on earth, and which is our strength to follow Him. Thus we have two rules by which to measure good and evil: on one hand, the Holy Spirit dwelling in us; and, on the other, the life and fullness of Christ Himself glorified. Concerning the Holy Spirit, by which we are sealed unto the day of redemption, we ought not to grieve it; rather ought we to be filled with it, that we may realize our communion with God with perfect joy. From our connection with Christ, we ought to put off the old man and put on the new, created in righteousness and true holiness; and in addition to all this, in sight of the fullness of His glory, we ought to grow up unto Him, in all things which is the Head, even Christ, unto a perfect man—unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

On the Experience of Abraham and of Jacob

The experiences of the heart occupy a large place in the thoughts of Christians. It is, nevertheless, important always to judge them by the word of God. These experiences are the expression of the inward state of the heart, and of our relations with others, as well as of the sentiments which our conduct, in these same relations, produces in our hearts and in our consciences.

It is not necessary here to speak of the experience of an unconverted person, although such a one is, nevertheless, not without experiences. It is true, that he does not know God; but, in a certain sense, he enjoys His goodness in nature—his conscience can blame him—he can be weary of sin, and alarmed at the thought of judgment. He can even forget the latter in the enjoyment of his family and society in a life naturally amiable; but he can do no more.

Nevertheless, there is a great variety in the experiences of men in whom the Spirit of God is working. This difference arises, on the one hand, from the relations in which we stand to God, and, on the other, from our conduct in the same relations. It is true that God has not put us under the law; yet, nevertheless, an awakened conscience is, as regards its relationship to God, either under the law or under grace. The Spirit of God, who has awakened it, has caused its light to enter, and produces there the feeling of its responsibility. I put myself under the law as long as I make my acceptance with God to depend on my faithfulness to God; that is, on the fulfillment of my duties. If, on the other hand, the love of God and His work in Christ are, for my conscience, the only and perfect ground of my adoption, then am I under grace. The Holy Spirit cannot weaken the responsibility; but He can reveal to me that God has saved my soul, which was lost because my life did not answer this responsibility.

As long as the awakened soul remains under the law, it has sad experiences; it feels that it is guilty according to the law, and that it has no power to keep it. It is well aware that the law is good; but, in spite of all its efforts, it does not attain its object, which is obedience. The experiences of souls in such a state are the experiences of their sin, of their weakness, and of the power of sin. Even supposing such a soul should not be as yet altogether brought to despair by the expectation of the just judgment of God, because it experiences in a slight degree the love of God, and because it hopes in the work of Christ, there will not be less uncertainty as to its relations with God, and this gives place to alternations of peace and trouble.

In the latter case, the soul has indeed been drawn by grace; but the conscience has not been purified, and the heart not set at liberty. These experiences are useful, in order to convince us of sin and weakness, and to destroy all confidence in ourselves. It is necessary that we should feel ourselves condemned before God, and that we should know, that henceforth all depends on His unmerited grace.

It is otherwise when our conscience is purged, and we have understood our position before God in Christ. Condemned in the presence of God, we understand that God has loved us, and that He justifies us by the work of His Son; we understand that sin is taken away, and our conscience is

made perfect. We have no longer conscience of sins before God, because He Himself has taken them away forever by the blood of Christ, and that blood is always before His eyes; we know, that being united with Christ, who has fully glorified God in that which concerns our sins, we have been made the righteousness of God in Him. So the heart is free to enjoy His love in the presence of God.

Thenceforth we are under grace; our relations with God depend, thenceforth, on God's nature, and the righteousness which Christ is become for us. Our relations with God do not depend on what we are before Him as responsible beings. Our experiences thenceforth ever return to this: that God is love, that Christ is our righteousness, and God our Father. We have communion with God and with His Son Jesus Christ. We enjoy all the privileges of that relation. Nevertheless, the use which we make of our privileges affects that enjoyment. These relations remain constantly the same, as well as the perception which we have of them; but the enjoyment of what God is in that relation, depends on our conduct in such a position.

The experiences are always founded on my relations with God. Am I sad? It is because the communion with God—communion which answers to my relations to Him—is interrupted. I feel that I do not enjoy the blessed communion to which I have attained, and it is this that causes my sadness; but this does not arise from uncertainty as to the communion itself. The flesh has no relations with God; and the flesh is ever in us. And “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Rom. 5:5) By this Spirit we have communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:7); and we are called on to walk in the light, as God Himself is in the light. (1 John 1:7) Our communion with God depends on our walking in the light, although, when we have lost it, God can visit us by His grace, and restore communion. But God is faithful, and does not permit sin in His children. If they do not walk with Him in the light, He will cause them to pass through all the trials and all the conflicts necessary to bring them to the knowledge of themselves, that they may remain in the light, and that their communion may be true and pure.

It is true that these trials and conflicts do not affect our relations with God, because they depend on what God is in Christ, according to His grace and righteousness; but the suspension of communion with God, a suspension which puts us outside of the enjoyment of the light, brings us into all kinds of conflicts, and painful and humbling experiences of what our own heart really is. God Himself also employs correction to humble us and break our will. Not only is the actual fall into sin an opportunity for the dealing of God with our souls, but all that is hard and rebellious in our souls also affords an opportunity for it. The consequence of these truths is, that the experiences of a soul that walks with God are far more simple than the experiences of an unfaithful soul; and, nevertheless, the knowledge of God and of the heart of man will be far deeper in the former case. As long as we walk in communion with Him, we walk in the light; and we have, in His presence, the continual sense of His fatherly love. Nevertheless, this presence acts upon our soul, to manifest all that is not in harmony with the light.

The judgment of ourselves takes place in the presence of God, in the sense of His love, and in connection with that love. Sin has the character of everything which is not light; and is judged, not only because sin cannot agree with holiness, but also because it does not agree with the love of God.

With hearts purified by the love of God, and strengthened by communion with Him, the grace which acts thus in us, takes the place of sin which has been judged, and thenceforth our walk in the world is the effect of the communion of God in our hearts. We carry God, so to speak, through the world in our hearts. Filled with His love, and living in the power of the life of Christ, that which Satan offers does not tempt us. Our worldly trials become a motive to obedience and not to sin. The presence of God in our hearts preserves us in our relations with men. Thenceforth we experience proofs of our corruption in the presence of God, and in communion with Him. It is thus we judge sin in ourselves, and sin thus judged does not appear in our walk. But if we do not walk in fellowship with God, if sin is not thus judged, we walk more or less in the world with a rebellious will and lusts unjudged. The action of our self-will makes us uneasy, because we are not satisfied. Are we satisfied? Then God is forgotten. Satan presents temptations which answer to unjudged lusts; then the corruption of the heart manifests itself by a fall, and by our relations with Satan, which take the place of our relations with God. Such a knowledge of the corruption of the heart will be never so deep, never so clear, never so true, as that which we shall have obtained in the presence of God by the light itself. We shall know sin by sin, by a bad conscience, instead of knowing it by the light of God Himself. We shall be humbled, instead of being humble. The faithfulness of God will restore the soul; but the continued power and growing light of His communion will not be the same. It is true we shall experience His patience and His goodness; but we shall not know God in the same way as when walking faithfully in communion with Him. It is true, God glorifies Himself by His ways with such a soul, because all things concur to His eternal glory; but the knowledge of God grows by our communion with Him.

The life of Abraham and that of Jacob come in the way of interesting examples in support of what we have been saying. It is true that neither the law, nor the fullness of grace, had been as yet revealed. Nevertheless, as we see in Hebrews 11, the principles of the life of faith on the promises of God were in general the same.

“In many things we offend all.” Abraham himself failed in faith on some occasions; but in general his life was a walk of faith with God. This is the reason why his experiences are of another nature, far more intimate with God, and more simple, than those of Jacob. His history is short, and not rich in incidents; while the communications of God to this patriarch are numerous and frequent. In his history there is much about God, and little about man. With one single exception, Abraham always remained in the land of promise. He was indeed a stranger and pilgrim, because the Canaanites dwelt there (Gen. 12:6), but he was in relation with God, and walked before Him.

At first when God had called him, he had not fully answered this call. It is true he left indeed his country and kindred, but not his father’s house, and so he did not arrive in Canaan. It is true he had given up a great deal; he had gone from Ur in Chaldea, but he came no farther than Charran, and rested there. (11: 31, 32) So it is with the heart that has not learned that it belongs entirely to God. It is only in conformity with the call of God that we can enter into the position of the promise.

After the death of his father Terah, Abraham started at the command of God; and they set out to come into the land of Canaan, and they entered into it. (12:5) Here we have the position of the heavenly people. Placed by the grace and power of God in a heavenly position, of which Canaan is a figure, they dwell there; they have everything in promise, but nothing as yet in possession. The Lord revealed Himself to Abraham in calling him; He reveals Himself anew to him in the place

which he now knew, and which he was going to possess: "I will give this land to thy posterity." (vs. 7) Such is in general our confidence in God, that we shall possess really in future that which we know now as strangers.

"And Abraham built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him" (vs. 7) He serves God and enjoys communion with Him. Thence he goes into another place, and there pitches his tent; he builds anew an altar to the Lord, and calls on the name of Jehovah. (vs. 8) He is a pilgrim in the land of promise, and that is his entire history. We dwell in the heavenly places, we enjoy them by faith, and we have communion with God, who brought us thither. Abraham's tent and altar in this place give a character to his whole history, and all the experiences of faith consist in that.

His unbelief brings him into Egypt. (vss. 10-21) There he had no altar. An Egyptian servant-maid becomes afterward the occasion of his fall, and a source of trouble to him She is, as we learn in Galatians 4:24,25, a type of the law; for the law and the flesh are always in relationship with each other. The grace of God brings Abraham back; but he does not regain an altar till he has returned to the place where he first pitched his tent, and to the altar which he had built before: there he has communion afresh with God. (13:3, 4)

The promises of God are the portion of Abraham. He lets Lot take what he pleases: "Is not the whole land before thee? Depart from me, I pray thee. If thou chooseth the left, I will take the right; and if thou take the right, I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the whole plain of Jordan, which, before the Lord had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, was watered throughout until one comes to Zoar, like the garden of the Lord, and like the land of Egypt. And Lot chose for himself the whole plain of Jordan." (vss. 9-11) Lot is the type of a worldly believer. He takes that which for the moment appears the better part, and chooses the place over which the judgment of God is suspended. Abraham had given up everything according to the flesh, and God shows him the whole extent of the promise. He gives him a visible proof of that which He has given him, and confirms it to him forever. (vss. 14-18) Lot, the worldly believer, is overcome by the princes of the world. Abraham delivers him. With the servants of his house he overcomes the power of the enemy. (14:1-21) He will receive nothing of the world. He says to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted up my hand to the Lord, the mighty God, the Sovereign, the possessor of heaven and earth, saying, Surely I will take nothing of all that belongeth to thee, from a thread to a shoe-latchet, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abraham rich." (14:22, 23)

Afterward God reveals Himself to Abraham as his buckler and great reward. He promises him a posterity at a time when his body was now dead; justified by faith, he receives the confirmation of the promises of God, who binds Himself by a sacrifice, type of the sacrifice of Christ. Then the inheritance is shown him in its details. (15)

Following the counsels of the flesh, Abraham desires for a moment the fulfillment of the promise by the law; that is to say, by Hagar. But thus he only learns that it is impossible that the child of the law should inherit with the child of promise. (16) Then God reveals Himself anew as God Almighty. He tells him that he shall be the father of many nations, and that God will be his God forever. (17:1-14) The posterity according to the promise is promised again. (17:15-19)

After that, God once more visits Abraham, and gives him positive promises respecting the approaching birth of his son. (18:9-15) He looks upon him as his friend, saying, " Shall I hide from

Abraham what I am going to do?" (18:17) He communicates to him His thoughts concerning the world, and Abraham converses with Him freely and in perfect peace. He prays for those who had forgotten the Lord. (18:23-33) It was necessary that Abraham should again experience, in the case of Ishmael, that the law produces sadness and anguish; and at the court of Abimelech he learned to know, that when unbelief is in action, it only produces troubles and sorrow. But God, in His faithfulness, watches over him, as well as over the mother of the posterity.

Afterward, Abraham was tried in the highest degree, till he had to give up everything according to the flesh, and even the promises. But the promises in a Christ raised in figure are confirmed to Christ Himself, and in Him to all the spiritual posterity of Abraham. (22:15-19; compare Gal. 3:16-18.)

Abraham then has learned by a fall that neither the law nor the promise are of any avail for the flesh; nevertheless, in general, his peculiar experiences consisted in pilgrimage and adoration, all the time he continued in the promised land. We have now remarked that his life is characterized by a tent and an altar. The whole experience, the whole life of the faithful Abraham, consists almost entirely of worship, intercession, and revelations from God; so that he learned to comprehend these latter with increasing clearness and accuracy. He passed his time in the place to which God had called him. The revelations of God were for him rich, sweet, and admirable. His knowledge of God intimate and deep, his personal experiences happy and simple; for he walked with God, who had revealed Himself to him, in grace.

Now let us also examine a little more closely the life and history of Jacob.

Jacob was the inheritor of the same promise, and, as a believer, he valued it; but he did not trust in God alone. He did not walk, like Abraham, in daily fellowship with the Lord, and waiting upon the Lord. It is true he received the promise, but his experiences were very different from those of Abraham. Although at the end of his life he could say, "The angel that delivered me from all evil," (Gen. 48:16,) he, nevertheless, was constrained to add, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage have been few and evil, and have not arrived at the days of the years of the life of my fathers, of the time of their pilgrimages." (47:9) The variety of his experience is a proof of unfaithfulness.

In compliance with his mother's advice, he employed profane means to obtain his father's blessing; and was obliged, through fear of his deceived but profane brother, to leave the land of promise. (27:28) Now his position is altogether changed; his unbelief has driven him out of the land of promise. His pilgrimage is not, like that of Abraham, in the land, but outside of it.

It is true, God watches over him, waits on him, and preserves him; but he does not walk with God. He has no altar till his return, after a course of painful experiences. (33:20) He had no full communion with God till he returned to the place where he had last enjoyed the revelation of God, and where he had been strengthened by His promises. For one-and-twenty years he had to do with men who cheated and oppressed him, while God preserved him in secret; but he could not possibly have an altar outside the land of promise.

We also worship God, and we have communion with God, while we dwell in spirit in heavenly places, there, where God Himself has given us our proper place. But if we get outside of it, we can have no fellowship with Him, although He knows how to keep us by His grace and faithfulness.

At the end of twenty-one years, God orders Jacob to return. He must flee far from his father-in-law like a guilty fugitive. It is impossible to be pure from the world if we have lost heavenly communion with God; and it is difficult not to carry away something that belongs to the world, if we abandon that communion. But God is faithful. From that moment a course of experiences begins for Jacob (as they are generally called), but which, nevertheless, are nothing more than the effects of his getting away from God.

Delivered from Laban, Jacob pursues his journey towards Canaan; and God, to comfort and fortify him, sends an army of His angels to meet him. (32:1) Nevertheless, notwithstanding this encouragement from God, unbelief, which deliverance from danger does not destroy, renews Jacob's fear in the presence of his brother Esau. One does not get rid of the difficulties of the path of faith by trying to avoid them; one must surmount them by the power of God. Jacob had brought these difficulties upon himself, because he had not trusted in God. The host of God was forgotten, and the army of Esau, who no longer cherished in heart hatred against his brother, frightened the feeble Jacob. (32:7) He could then employ all kinds of means to appease the presumed and dreaded anger of his brother. He causes flock after flock to pass, and that does more to show the state of the heart of Jacob, than to change that of Esau. Nevertheless, Jacob thinks of God; he reminds Him that He told him he ought to return; he implores Him to save him from the hands of his brother; he thinks of the state in which he left the country, and acknowledges that God has given him all his possessions. (32:9-11) But his prayer discovers an ungrounded fear. He reminds God of His promises, as if it were possible that He had forgotten them. It is true there is faith there, but the effect of unbelief produces a wild and confused picture. The timid Jacob has not only sent forward his flocks to appease Esau (32:13-20), but he sends his whole family across the brook, and remains behind alone. (vs. 22, 24) His heart is filled with anxieties. But God, who guides all, awaits him precisely there. Although He had not permitted Esau to touch so much as a hair of Jacob's head, He nevertheless had Himself to judge him, and bring him into the light of His presence; for Jacob could in no other way enjoy the land of promise with God. God wrestles with him in the darkness till daybreak. (vs. 24) It is not here Jacob wrestling with God of his own accord; but it is God wrestling against him.

He could not bless him simply, like Abraham; he must first correct the unbelief of his heart. Jacob must experience the effects of his conduct—he must even suffer, because God will bless him. Nevertheless, the love of God is acting in all this. He gives strength to Jacob during the conflict in which he must engage to obtain the blessings, to persevere in waiting for them. He will nevertheless have to retain a lasting proof of his weakness and previous unfaithfulness. His hip joint had been put out while God wrestled with him. (vs. 25) And not only that, but God also refuses to reveal His name to him unreservedly. He blesses Jacob. He gives him a name in memorial of his fight of faith, but He does not reveal Himself. How great is the difference here between Jacob and Abraham! God reveals His name to the latter without being asked to do so, that Abraham may know Him fully; for Abraham generally walked with Him in the power of this revelation. He had no conflict with God; and, far from having to fear his kinsfolk, he overcame the power of the kings of this world. He is there as a prince among the inhabitants of the land. God frequently converses with him; and instead of wrestling with Him to obtain a blessing for himself, Abraham intercedes for others. He sees the judgment of the world from the height where he was in communion with God. Let us return to the history of Jacob.

Notwithstanding all, his fear never leaves him. Blessed by God by means of his conflict, he still trembles before his brother Esau. He divides his children and wives according to the measuring of his affections, so that those whom he most loved were at the greatest distance from Esau. Only then does he undertake to go to meet his brother. But nevertheless he deceives him again. He evades the offer of an escort which Esau makes him, and promises to follow him a little more gently to his residence near Seir. (33:14) But Jacob went to Succoth. (vs. 17)

Now Israel (Jacob) is in the country, nevertheless his heart having been long accustomed to the condition of a traveler without God, he knows not how to become a pilgrim with God. He buys a field near Sichem, and settles himself in a place where Abraham was only a stranger, and where, knowing the will of God, he had not possessed a spot of ground whereon to set his foot. (vs. 19) It is at Sichem for the first time, and after having returned into the land, that he builds an altar; the name of the altar recalls the blessing of Israel, but not the name of the God of the promises. He calls the altar "God, the God of Israel." (33:20) Thankfulness, it is true, recognizes the blessing which Jacob has received; but the God who blessed him is not yet revealed.

We now find corruption and violence in his family (34). The wrath of his sons, cruel, and void of the fear of God, brings him out of his false rest, which was not founded on God; but again the faithfulness of God preserves him. Hitherto Jacob had not thought of the place where God Himself had made him the promise, from the time of his departure, and where Jacob had promised to worship when he should have returned by the help of God. God Himself sends him there now, and says to him, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and there set up an altar to the strong God who appeared to thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." (35:1) God, who had guarded, guided, chastened him, had prepared him to come into communion with Him. But first it was necessary that he should leave his false home, where God was not. He must lodge at Bethel (the house of God), and in that very place build an altar to God who had first revealed Himself to him. We here see the instantaneous effect of the presence of God with Jacob, a presence which he had not yet learned to know, in spite of all his experiences up to that moment. The thought of that presence immediately recalls to his mind the false gods which were still among his furniture. These false gods were the effect of his connection with the world; and Rachel, from fear of Laban, had hid them under the camels' furniture. Jacob knew well that they were there; nevertheless he said to his family and to all those who were with him, "Put away the false gods that are in the midst of you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments, and arise and let us go to Bethel, and I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and who has been with me in the way that I came. Then they gave Jacob all the false gods that they had in their hands, and the rings that were in their ears, and he hid them under the oak that was by Sichem." (35:2, 4) The thought of the presence of God made him remember the false gods; it awakens in his soul the conviction that the gods, the objects of the adoration of this world, can never be kept together with a faithful God. Nothing else can awaken this conviction. No possible experiences can ever have the effect which the presence of God produces on a soul. Such experiences are useful to humble us, they are a means of stripping us of ourselves.

Nevertheless it is only the presence of God as light which can cause us to condemn ourselves, and give us power to purify ourselves from our deepest and well-known though hidden idols. Abraham had nothing to do either with Jacob's idols or Jacob's experiences.

The fear of God reigned over the enemies of Jacob, so that they did not follow him, notwithstanding the murderous violence of his sons. (35:5) Now God could reveal Himself to Jacob; and although he remained lame, all went on as if he had not before passed through any experience. Jacob had come to Bethel, from whence he had started. There he built an altar to the God who had made him the promises, and who had always been faithful to him. The name of his altar no longer reminds us of Jacob blessed, but of Him who blesses, and of His house. It is not called the altar of God, the God of Israel, but the altar of the God of Bethel; that is to say, of the house of God. (35:7) God at this hour speaks with Jacob, without saying anything at all of his experiences. These had been necessary to chasten Jacob, and empty him of himself, because he had been unfaithful. God Himself appeared to him now without being entreated. We read in Genesis 35:9, God appeared again to Jacob when he came from Padan-Aram, and blessed him. He gave him the name of Israel, as if He had not given it him before, and reveals to him His name without Jacob having asked it of Him. He converses with him as formerly with Abraham. He renews the promises, and confirms them to him—at least, those which have reference to Israel; and after having ended his communication with him, God went up from him, for He had visited him. (Gen. 35:13)

Jacob was then returned, after a course of experiences, to the place where he could have communion with God, to a position in which, by the grace of God, Abraham had almost always kept himself. Jacob is a warning to us, but Abraham is an example. The first has, it is true, found the Lord again by His grace; but he has not had the many and blessed experiences of the other, he does not pray for others. The highest point of attainment with him is Abraham's starting point, even the home of his soul. With the exception of a few falls, this was the habitual state of Abraham, the state in which he lived. "Abraham died in a good old age, old and full of days, and he was gathered to his people." But Jacob said, "The days of the years of my life have been few and evil, and have not amounted to the days of the years of the life of my fathers, even the time of their pilgrimages." (Gen. 25:8, and 47:9) He ended his life in Egypt.

The experiences of Jacob are the experiences of what the hearts of men are. The experiences of Abraham are the experiences of the heart of God.

We have described three kinds of experiences: 1st. Those which take place under the law, the position of a believer not known, or when, without being ignorant of it, he is there, having his heart all the time under the law. 2nd. The experiences which one has of his own heart, from the time that one walks far from that position where God reveals Himself to cherish and keep up this communion. 3rd. The simple and blessed experiences which one has in walking with God, in the place where God has set us, to enjoy communion with Him in lowliness and thankfulness. These last are experiences of the heart of God, which bring us into the knowledge of His counsels, and of the faithful love which is contained in them. They consist in a close communion with God Himself; the others are, as it has been said, the painful experiences of the heart of man, among which the highest degree—and also precious for us—is, that God remains faithful in the midst of our unfaithfulness, and that He is patient towards our folly, by the which we put ourselves at a distance from His presence.

Our privilege is to walk like Abraham; our refuge when we are unfaithful (for God is faithful who does not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear) is that God remains faithful, and

draws us out of all danger to the end. May God give us grace to dwell near to Him, to walk with Him, that our experiences may have for their end the growing knowledge of His love and of His nature. (Col. 1:9-12)

The Gentile

There is something much to be observed in the opening of the book of Daniel.

It was the moment when the Gentile was receiving the sword of government from the hand of the Lord; and this Scripture lets us know with what mind the Gentile did receive it; and we see that it was a very bad mind indeed.

The Gentile would never have had the sword in this way, if Israel had been true to Jehovah, and the house of David continued in their integrity. But at this moment, when the Chaldean is thus endowed, Jerusalem is a wilderness, and the glory is departed from the earth.

The Gentile, therefore, in taking the sword, should have taken it as with a burdened heart. He should, in spirit, have sorrowfully tracked the way by which power had now come into his hand, and have accepted it as with grief and trembling. This would have been the right mind in the Gentile when accepting power from God on the fall of Jerusalem and the departure of the glory.

In such a spirit David accepted power. It was Saul's apostasy that opened the passage to the throne for David. But Saul was God's anointed; and the fall of the anointed of the Lord was before David at that moment, rather than his own exultation. He lamented with a sore lamentation over the mountains of Gilboa, where Saul and Jonathan had been slain. (2 Sam. 1)

This was beautiful, and the very opposite or contradiction of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 1. Instead of mourning, the king of Babylon triumphs; and the very first thing he does is to adorn his palace, the seat and witness of his power, with the best-favored children he could get from among the captives of Judah.

Nebuchadnezzar should not have looked on Jerusalem in the day of her calamity. He may have been the rod of the Lord's indignation against her, but he should have used his commission with a grieved heart. The glory itself, though it had to leave Zion (Ezek. 8-11) left it reluctantly and with reserve, and, as I may say, sorrowfully.

And this Gentile should have known, also, the holiness of Judah, and how near the Lord had been to Israel. If he never thought of this, it was because of the hardness of his heart, and he is answerable for such hardness that blinded him, as the world is answerable for not knowing Him who made it when He was in it. The Gentile should have known that God's house was at Jerusalem; a house, too, made to be a house of prayer for all nations. All this was the witness of God's presence in that city; and the Gentile's exultation in the day of her calamity is the Gentile's wickedness.

All this condemns the Gentile from the very beginning. And when we look around and abroad, we see him in the same spirit to this day. Nay, the Gentile has this further sin attaching to him He is now in Christendom, exalting himself, advancing, enriching, and adorning himself in the world, though Christ, the King of glory, like the glory of old in Jerusalem, has been grieved and sent away. The present Gentile is careless about the sorrows and the blood of Jesus, just as

Nebuchadnezzar, in his day, was careless and thoughtless about the fall and the griefs of Jerusalem. The Gentile is the Gentile still; and God's indignation against Jerusalem shall end in his destruction.

Fragment: Saul and David

Saul lost the kingdom of Israel through independence—through want of waiting upon God. He saw his people scattered from him, and his enemies pressing hard upon him; and these proofs of his weakness were too much for his heart unsustained by trust in God. He could not in such a trial wait for God. David gained the kingdom by taking the place of independence, and by taking as his motto: “My soul, wait thou only upon God.” — “My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth.”

Hardening the Heart

There are Scriptures which contemplate a succession of eras or times all along the course of the earth's history, from the time of the flood, I may say, to the days of Antichrist, when there has been, or is to be, a judicial visitation, under the hand of God, upon the hearts, understandings, and consciences of men.

I might present the following instances:

The old Gentile world|Romans 1:28|

Pharaoh or Egypt|Exodus 9:21|

The kings of Canaan|John 11:20|

Israel|Isaiah 6|

Christendom|2 Thessalonians 2|

These scriptures show us this judicial dementation of which I am speaking; and they further show us, that the fruit or character of this dementation may be very startling, such as we could not easily have believed or feared.

Under it, men of refinement and intelligence may adopt all kinds of religious vanity; rulers and statesmen may be blinded to the plainest maxims of government. Did not Pharaoh persist in a course which, in the mouth of witness after witness, was sure to be the ruin of his kingdom? Did not the nations of Canaan tremble at the report of the conquests of Israel, and of what God had done for Israel; and yet, in spite of all that, did they not madly resist Israel? (See Josh) And will not whole communities of intelligent, refined, advanced people, by-and-by, bow to the claims of one who shows Himself to be God, setting Himself up above all that is worshipped?

This has been thus, and will be thus still, under this judicial dementation; worldly men violate the clearest and most sensible means of their own interests, and religious men depart from the simplest instructions of the truth. We are not to wonder at anything. The very idols which men have taken as spoils of war, they have afterward bowed down to as their gods. (2 Chron. 25:14) For what folly, what incredible blindness of understanding, will not the infatuated heart of man betray. But this dementation is never sent forth to visit man until he has righteously exposed himself to judgment. All the cases show this. Pharaoh, for instance, had, in deepest ingratitude, forgotten Joseph. The Amorites of Canaan had filled up the measure of their sins. The old Gentiles had brought this reprobate mind on themselves. (Rom. 1:28) Israel "had not," Jerusalem "would not." (Matt. 13:12; 23: 37) And the strong delusion is to be sent, by-and-by, abroad upon Christendom, only because " they loved not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

This hardening precedes destruction; but it comes after man has ripened his iniquity. God endures with all long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, as He fashions by His Spirit His own elect vessels of mercy ere He glorifies them. "Whom He will He hardens," is surely true; but

He wills to show His wrath in this way, of hardening, or of prejudicial dementation, only in the case of those whom He has in much long suffering endured. (Rom. 9:1;1-2 2)

Thus, then, we see there is such a process in the judgment of God as the hardening of the heart—that this is never executed till man has ripened himself in evil—and that the fruit of this may appear in such human folly and blindness as we should never have apprehended, or perhaps conceived.

Let this prepare us for things which not only may shortly come to pass, but which have already appeared. Men of learning and of taste, men of morals and religion, men of skill in the science of government, and whole nations famed for dignity and greatness, each in their generation may be turned to fables and to follies enough to shake the commonest understandings in ordinary times.

I do not say the “strong delusion” has gone forth; but there are symptoms and admonitions of its not being far off. What a voice has this for us, to keep near to the Lord in the assurance of His love, to love His truth, to walk immediately with Himself, and to promise ourselves that His tarrying is not long.

Fragment: Our Motive the Glory of God

“Those who fight the Lord’s battles must be contented to be in no respect accounted of; they must expect to be in no respect encouraged by the prospect of human praise. And if you make an exception, that the children of God will praise you, whatever the world may say,” beware of this, for you may turn them into a world, and find in them a world, and may sow to the flesh in sowing to their approbation; and you neither will be benefited by them nor they by you, so long as respect for them is your motive. All such motives are a poison and a taking away from you the strength in which you are to give glory to God. It is not the fact, that all that see the face of the Lord do see each other. It is not the fact, that the misapprehension of the world is the only misapprehension the Christian must be contented to labor under. He must expect even his brethren to see him through a mist, and to be disappointed of their sympathy and their cheers of approbation; the man of God must walk alone with God, he must be contented that the Lord knoweth. And it is such a relief, yea, it is such a relief to the natural man with us, to fall back upon human countenances, and human thoughts and sympathy, that we often deceive ourselves, and think it brotherly love, when we are just resting in the early sympathy of some fellow worm. You are to be followers of Him who was left alone, and you are, like Him, to rejoice you are not alone, because the Father is with you, that you may give glory to God. Oh! I cannot but speak of it. It is such a glory to God to see a soul that has been accessible to the praise of men, surrounded by hundreds and thousands of his fellow creatures, every one of whom He knows how to please, and yet that he should be contented, yea, pleased and happy, in doing, with a single reference to God, that which he knows they will all misunderstand. Here was the victory of Jesus—there was not a single heart that beat in sympathy with His heart, or entered into His bitter sorrow, or bore His grief in the hour of His bitter grief; but His way was with the Lord—His judgment was with His God—His Father—who said, “There is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This was the perfect glory given to the Father by the Son, that in flesh and blood such a trust in God was manifested; and that is what you are called to, and you are not called to it as He was, but you are called to see God in Him God has come near to you in Christ, and here you have a human heart—a perfect sympathy—the heart of God is your nature, and to this you are ever carried. And if there be any other sympathy with you in the wide universe, whether on the sea of glass, or still on this earth, it is only as the pulsation of the blood that flows from Christ—to His members—that it is to you of any account. Feed upon it, and remember you are thus to walk in the world not hanging one upon another.”

The Transforming Power of the Glory

What is the practical effect of “looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face”? (2 Cor. 3:18) Paul is here contrasting the ministration of death with the ministration of righteousness. Though the glory in the former consumed, because it only appeared with a claim on man who was unable to meet it (for righteousness was not fully established), yet Moses bore in his face marks of its transforming power. Because of man’s condition, it was fearful in its bearing on him; yet, as we see in Moses, no one could be in it without partaking of its excellency. Moses’ face therefore bore distinct traces of it. Israel refused even to gaze on the effects of it on Moses’ face. Man, when seeking to maintain his own righteousness before God, shrinks from admiration of the transforming power of God; Israel therefore, in asking Moses to place a veil on his face, only declared the moral distance of their own hearts from God. Hence the veil is transferred to their hearts.

But now, says Paul, there is a wonderful contrast. It is now the ministration of righteousness, and that from the same glory. So was it announced (in Luke 2) when the glory of the Lord shone round about the shepherds. The Son of God was come to establish righteousness from the same glory from which had come the claim of righteousness. And therefore, if the glory had the power to produce such effects on the face of Moses, when man in his then condition could not look at it, how much more now, when it is a ministration of righteousness! Hence the “apostle declares that we, use much boldness, and, looking on the Lord with unveiled face,” are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory. It effects a moral transformation into its own likeness. Humbling though it be to admit it, any association with that which is morally superior to us must have this effect on us. If we decline to inferior associations, we deprave our better tendencies; but if we are occupied with moral superiority, we always adopt rather than improve. We adopt a new habit of action instead of only improving any existing one, and as the glory of God is unique and morally supreme, if we are conversant with it, we naturally, and almost unconsciously, adopt its characteristics and qualities, so that we are really in the process of transformation, and not merely of improvement.

I turn now to the traces of these effects, and how we may notice them. It is remarkable how differently we view the same things at different times. This may be even when we feel them most, but then we are in the spirit of our mind most above them. The same painful question occupied the mind of the Psalmist when outside the sanctuary and when inside; but it is evident that he was a totally different man as to feeling, when in one and when in the other. The light of the glory had so transformed Stephen, that he was practically superior to the violence leveled against him; but he was all the more affected for those who perpetrated it; so that I should say that the chief traces of the moral effect of the glory are a greater sensitiveness to the evil afflicting me, but a marked and sensible elevation above it.

Again, how can I distinguish “looking on the glory of the Lord” from any other spiritual exercise? If this be difficult, it is so simply because the soul is so slow to enter into the counsel of God in His

grace to us, or to realize that counsel as a manifestation of His own heart, in the person of His only begotten Son, from the very center of the glory. The grace which has reached us has its origin in the glory; it belongs to it, so to speak; and it is not answered, according to its native interest, until it connects us with the glory. If I understand the origin of this grace, and how I am bound up with it, I must understand its associations. Its origin is the center of the glory; its association is the Person of the glory; and when I find myself in this association, through the grace of God manifested to me, I am "looking on the glory of the Lord." If the light made Paul blind (as a man), he never lost the remembrance of it in his soul; therefore, he called it "the mark."

Joshua 5

I would say a word as to the way in which Christ may be considered as our food. He may be looked at as the food of the Christian in three ways.

First, as a redeemed sinner; secondly, in connection with sitting in heavenly places in Christ; and thirdly, as a pilgrim and stranger down here. But this last is merely accessory, and not the proper portion of the Christian. The Lord said to Israel that He had come down to deliver them from Egypt, and bring them into the land of Canaan. He did not say a word about the wilderness when He came to deliver them from Egypt, because His interference for them there was in the power of redemption and for the accomplishment of His promises. However, there was the wilderness, as well as redemption from Egypt and the entrance into Canaan; and Christ answers as our food to these three things. Two of them are permanent; for we are nourished by Christ in two ways permanently; that is, in redemption and glory. The third way is as the manna which we have all along the road. It is in these three ways that Christ meets His people, and nourishes them all the way. Two of them remain, as we have seen; but the third ceases when the circumstances it was to meet have passed away. They did eat the passover and the manna until they got into the land, then the manna ceased; but they continued to eat of the passover.

Now, there are two ways in which it is proper for us ever to be feeding on Christ. First, as the passover; for they ate the paschal lamb when the wilderness had ceased and Egypt had been long left behind. When in Egypt, the blood was on the lintel and the doorposts, and the Israelite ate of the lamb inside the house. The thought they had while they were eating it was, that God was going through the land as an avenging judge; and the effect of the blood on the doorposts was to keep God out, which was a great thing to do; for if brought into God's presence as a judge, woe be to him in whom sin is found.

The state of the one that now eats of Christ is just according as he estimates the value of the cross, through fear of what sin actually merits. When we have got into the effect of the blood of the paschal lamb, we have got into Canaan, and enjoy the peace of the land as a delivered people, having crossed the Jordan—not only the Red Sea; that is, we have passed through death and resurrection—not as knowing Christ dead and risen for us merely, as presented in the Red Sea, but as being dead with Him and entered into heavenly places with Him, as in Jordan. Then the character of God is known as their God; that is, the accomplisher of all that which He purposed towards them. It is not keeping God out now, but it is enjoying His love, not looking at God as in the cross pouring out wrath in judgment against sin. In Jesus, on the cross, there was perfect justice and perfect love. What devotedness to the Father, and what tender love to us! And this is the way the saint who is in peace feeds on the cross. It is not feeding on it as knowing that he is safe; for Israel's keeping the passover after they got into Canaan was very different from their keeping it when judgment was passing over. In Canaan they were in peace, and they were able to glorify God in this way, in the remembrance of their redemption from Egypt.

In this type we see presented, not the sinner that feels he is safe, but the saint that can glorify God in his affections, his heart confidently flowing out to him, and feeding on Christ as the old corn of the land—the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. We see Christ now by faith at the right hand of God as the glorified man, not merely as Son of God, but as Son of Man; as Stephen, when the heavens were opened to him, beheld Jesus at the right hand of God. We also see Him up there. We do not see Him as he is represented in the Revelation, seated on a white horse, coming forth out of heaven. He will indeed come forth, and receive us up where He is, and we shall be like Him, and be forever with Him; but we shall feed on Him as the old corn of the land when we are there, and this is our proper portion now; manna is not our portion, though it is our provision by the way.

Joshua sees Jehovah as the Captain of Jehovah's host, and Israel feeds in the land before they fight. And our portion is to sit down in it before we fight, because God has given it to us. They do not eat the manna in Canaan, because it is for the wilderness. The manna is not Christ in the heavens; it is Christ down here. It is not our portion; our portion is the old corn of the land; that is, the whole thing, according to God's counsels, is redemption and glory. But all our life is exercise down here, or sin (excepting that God does give us moments of joy), because while here there is nothing but what acts on the flesh, or gives occasion for service to God. We may fail, and then Christ comes and feeds us with manna; that is, His sympathy with us down here, and shows how His grace is applied to all the circumstances of our daily life—and that is a happy thing. For most of our time, the far greater part of our life, we are occupied in these things, necessary and lawful things no doubt, but not occupied with heavenly joy in Christ; and these things are apt to turn away the heart from the Lord, and hinder our joy. But if we would have our appetites feed on Him as the old corn of the land, we must have the habit of feeding on Him as the manna.

For instance, something may make me impatient during the day. Well, then, Christ is my patience; and thus He is the manna to sustain me in patience. He is the source of grace, not merely the example which I am to copy. He is more than this; for I am to draw strength from Him, to feed upon Him daily; for we need Him, and it is impossible to enjoy Him as the paschal lamb, unless we are also feeding on Him as the manna.

We know that God delights in Christ, and He gives us a capacity to enjoy Him too. To have such affections is the highest possible privilege; but to enjoy Him, we must feed on Him every day. It is to know Christ come down to bring the needed grace, and turn the dangerous circumstances with which we are surrounded to the occasion of our feeding on Himself as the manna to sustain us and strengthen us in our trial.

The "Holy Place" had holy food,

Each Sabbath newly spread:

'Tis Jesus that I here behold,

The true and living bread.

The "Holy Place" is full of light,

A light that goes out never!

'Tis Jesus who has changed my night

To day that lasts forever.

Three Characters of the Lord Jesus

There are three very important characters in which the Lord Jesus is presented to us in these verses:

1st, As THE SUBJECT OF TESTIMONY;

2nd, As THE GIVER OF LIFE;

3rd, As THE EXECUTOR OF JUDGMENT.

Now He stands in relation to all men in one or other of these positions.

First, He presents Himself as the SUBJECT OF TESTIMONY; but it is, nevertheless, as coming in the Father's name. "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me. If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of Me; and I know that the witness which He witnesseth of Me is true." (vss. 31, 32) His own witness was also true; but that which He states is, 'If I am seeking to glorify Myself, I demand not your confidence, I ask you not to believe.' Just as He says elsewhere, "He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh His glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." And this ever holds good. If a man is seeking to exalt self, he has a motive that is not truth, his witness is not true. At the same time there was a witness unto Himself, and as such He appeals to all the various testimony that existed for Him in the world. "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth." (vs. 33) Again, "The works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of Me." (vs. 36) Again, "The Father Himself, which hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me." (vs. 37) And again, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." (vs. 39)

The Lord Jesus refers to these four witnesses; first, John; secondly, His works; thirdly, the Father; fourthly, the Scriptures: and yet He tells those to whom He spoke, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life." (vs. 40) Presented with this full and adequate testimony to the consciences of men (not merely an abstract testimony, but that which was suited to their circumstances), they refused it all, they would not come to Him, that they might have life: And mark the terrible conclusion, "Ye will receive this evil one." "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive HIM not: if another shall come in his own name, HIM ye will receive." (vs. 43) What a testimony against man!

Another character in which we find the Lord Jesus presented here, is in LIFE-GIVING POWER: "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." (vs. 21) Life-giving is attributed both to the Father and the Son.

But there is marked distinction in that which follows, as to the third character of Christ—THE EXECUTOR OF JUDGMENT. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." (vs. 22) As "Son of Man," He has been dishonored and rejected by men; therefore all judgment is committed into His hands, in order "that all men should honor the Son, even as they

honor the Father.” (vs. 23) Here He stands alone.

And see the point that is settled here.

When the Lord Jesus presents Himself as giving life, He also, and most graciously, shows us how we may count on the assurance of possessing life. Now this is of the very last importance. There is many an one that can with truth of heart own Him as the giver of divine life, that, nevertheless, is unable to say, “I have that life.” Our Lord does not leave the anxiety of such unanswered. After stating that all men (even those who had rejected Him, as we have seen, one day in His character of Judge) should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father, He adds, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (judgment); but is passed from death unto life.” (vs. 24)

The question is one of judgment or of life. We have seen that the Father gives life, and the Son gives life. We have seen, too, that all judgment is committed unto the Son. But here Jesus shows who is to come under the judgment, and who is to have life. This answers the question at once. He says, he that believeth “hath,” not shall have, “everlasting life,” and that such an one “shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” On this basis all happy feeling before God, all joy, is founded. Here begins the exercise of all holy affections and ways. A child cannot love its parent before it is born (there is no need to reason about that), though it may love long before it can express it—long before there is intellectual explanation.

Here is the difference between the law and the gospel. Law puts a man upon the acquisition of life; it sets him to do before he gets life. All Christian holiness, all Christian affections flow from the fact of having life. The voice of the good Shepherd reaches the ear, and he who hears it, believing that the Father hath sent the Son, has this assurance, he “shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” It would be to bring into doubt His own work, were Christ to call such in question as to salvation. He ever keeps distinct His two offices of Life-giver and Judge.

It might appear that in verses 28, 29 He confounds the two. But is it so? No; He states a further truth. He had before been speaking of the quickening of the soul, and now He says, “Marvel not at this,” there is going to be a resurrection of the body also. It is in resurrection that He will fulfill the whole effect and result of His life-giving power. There will be a “resurrection of life,” and also a “resurrection of judgment.” The two things are kept most definite and distinct. But the honor of Christ as “Son of Man” is secured from all. We (those who have believed) do not need judgment to, oblige us to render Him honor, we honor Him now as the source of life; He has quickened us, forgiven us our sins; through Him we have fellowship with the father; He has done everything for us. The wicked shall also honor Him then.

There is a remarkable passage in Romans 8 in illustration of this distinction. The apostle, after speaking of the law, takes up the result of the work of Christ, and says, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death”. And then in verse 11, “If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” That will not be true of the wicked at all; they will not be raised in virtue of the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them—they have it not.

We see then, as it were, this great track of life. Christ is the Life-giver to His people; first to soul, and then to body.

The evidence to others of our having life is shown in conduct, though that is not brought out here; but the proof and the assurance to my own soul is based on this, "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life." Whilst fruits will flow, and must flow, from faith in Christ, it is of the utmost importance, in the midst of the evil with which we are conversant, to have the ground on which peace rests as simple as possible, and that is just what God has made it. The work on which it is founded concerns all the glory; I see Christ coming, and dying, and communicating life, that into which life so communicated brings, being all the Father's purposes in the Son. The link to my own soul is as simple as possible, it is not a long process which might tend to puzzle and perplex, but the evidence of the word, "He that heareth..."

What is the effect of this? Christ becomes everything to us. Surely this is practical sanctification. If I wanted to describe a holy man, I should describe one who was always thinking of the Father's love and the Son's grace, and never of self.

Here then there is comfort and peace (and what a comfort is the settled certainty of salvation!) in this setting to our seal that God is true. It is not in the searching of my own heart, but in the assurance of the word of God. There is nothing like the simple certainty of faith. "He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." I assume that I am a person in an anxious state of soul and wanting to get the certainty of life possessed, I look at the testimony of God. There I get absolute certainty. I say, 'God is true.' This is faith. All that I discover in myself is not faith. I may be much exercised, but there is not one thing in my own heart that can in the least assist me in finding out anything about this life. Faith rests upon the testimony of God. When I have received and rested upon His testimony, it is important for me to examine myself as to my ways and the like, but I never go and search into my own heart for certainty as to whether the blessed Son of God has told me the truth, "He that heareth...". Observe again; there is no searching any further than this; I believe on Him who sent the Son; in the presence of the Father and the Son I have eternal life, Who can give me more? Life may be fed indeed here, and glorified hereafter; but there is no searching any deeper. There may be exercises of soul in bringing to it; but the definition John gives of a Christian is this: "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." "Hereby perceive we love, because He laid down His life for us."

There is another point: the written testimony of God has a higher place than any other.

A few words more upon the difference between life-giving and judgment. Now it is that Christ gives life. When He comes as Judge, He will not give life at all, He will come for judgment. There is no confounding or mingling of the two things, either as to time or act. If judgment comes in before grace has given life, who can stand?

Having seen the way of life, there is next the contrast of result where testimony is not received.

In the fall of our first parents, we see sin in three distinct and principal elements. And those have continued to characterize man ever since. Man gives ear to Satan, or, in other words, is led of the serpent; exalts himself to be as God; follows his own lusts, and is disobedient.

Scripture gives us the development of this, in principle all through, and shows that it will be so at the end. Man whilst in the enjoyment of blessings, listens to and trusts Satan. But mark the suggestion of the devil, "Ye shall be as gods." He can tell truth if it subserve sin. If we have the truth nothing can harm us; but Satan can tell truth, a great deal of truth, provided he can only win attention by it, and so deceive. See his temptation of our Lord. There he quotes Scripture, gives a promise of God, quite rightly applicable in a certain sense, had Jesus listened. The first Adam did so, and came by the ways of Satan to know good and evil. But it was by disobedience, and he continued not with God. Satan told not all the truth, he did not say 'you shall be a lost creature.' Lust worked, disobedience followed, and consequently exclusion from God's presence.

But testimony for Christ has another element in it. It is not merely that man is a sinner; there has been the rejection of God in grace. What was the question when Christ was in the world? Not whether man had sinned; but would man, a sinner, receive testimony for God in grace. If you traced the history of man, from the beginning until Christ came, you would say, his mouth must be stopped, Satan's power over the heart is revealed throughout. Driven from paradise, instead of becoming better, Cain kills his brother. Then comes the deluge, sweeping away the whole race except eight persons, but afterward they are as bad as ever. Noah gets intoxicated, Ham dishonors his father, and after that idolatry enters. Again, before Moses comes down from the mount, the people have made a calf. Before the eight days of solemn purification are over, Aaron's sons take strange fire and offer before the Lord. In short, in all God's dealings with Israel as a nation, this truth is strongly marked. The principle of the heart is wrong. Nay more, the nearer man is to God externally, the worse is ever the character of his guilt, if there be not living fellowship with Him. When Jesus came into the world, though He could get joy out of the Samaritans, and out of a poor Syro-phoenician woman, whose condition was as a "dog" ill respect of Jewish privileges, "His own" were found full of pride of heart, and "received Him not." Judas was quite close to Christ, yet he betrayed Him. The development of evil is just in proportion to its nearness to good, if the power of good is not there. So with Christendom. The name of Christianity, where there is not the living power of it, is the very place in which the worst evil is to be looked for.

And observe here the awful manner in which conscience can deceive itself. "The chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood;" there had been no scruple in giving the money for that blood. The very same money wherewith they had bought Christ, they will not put into the treasury! What a picture of man's heart, of man's consistency- exact about external, ceremonial points, callous as to moral pravity!

But, as to the question of the reception of testimony. Into this world of sin and iniquity, however bad man might have been proved, it mattered not, the Son of Man came down in grace. His testimony rejected— "ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life:" what is the consequence? "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive ME not; if another shall come in his own name, HIM ye will receive." Here is a new form of evil. Man shall set himself up, and be received, because he comes in his own name. And yet it is but the ripeness and development of his sin in Eden, the same in principle, only, after Christ, he then exalted himself to be as God; to act after his own will, though in reality he was the tool of Satan. The same thing shall come to pass again, testimony having been rejected, as it is said, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." (2 Thess. 2) There will be a license, and more than a license too, for man to set himself up, to seek his own name, and "HIM ye will receive."

If you trace man's evil, you will find, it is true, a testimony to it bad enough, whatever the restraints God, in His supreme power, may have placed upon it. But there has been restraint, especially since the flood. Government met this point in the world, first, directly exercised amongst the Jews, and afterward extended to the Gentiles, in the four great empires, of which Nebuchadnezzar was the first head—the Babylonish, Persian, Grecian, and Roman. Passing over their general history, it will suffice to say, that the fourth of these empires had just come out in prominence, when our Lord appeared on the earth. "There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed." The result of this, as well as of religion in man, was brought out in His rejection. All joined together, the heads both of civil and religious power, to crucify Christ. The cry of the Jews was, "We have no king but Caesar;" and Pilate, representative of Gentile dominion, knowing His innocence, acquiesced in their malice.

Another thing was brought out, upon the accomplishment of all this evil in man, a testimony unto the heavenly blessedness of those who believe in Him whom the world had rejected. "Blessed is he who hath not seen, and yet hath believed." There are those who believe on a record given of God's Son, and eternal life belongs to them.

Well, now, if we find any religious form of evil, we find it here in the profession of Christianity, not amongst the avowed haters of Christ. One special mark of the "perilous times" in "the last days," concerning which we have prophetic testimony, is the "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." The same thing in principle as amongst the Jews. The Pharisees were a religious people; they had the "form of godliness," but Christ, the "power," they "denied" (Acts 3:13). Wherefore the testimony against them, "Now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father."

One great principle of religious forms of evil is, that they are always suited to the flesh. There is a religious tendency in man: he will bow down to something. You may find a hard spirit here and there rejecting everything; but, as a general truth, man must have his religion. The "form of godliness" is just suited to this. Nature through it seeks to satisfy its holiness, whilst at the same time man's will comes in, man is exalted. Whatever the flesh can look at, or do, or cling to, as man's works, ordinances, and so on, all these things will be esteemed. If it be but a "form of godliness," though the strictest sect of the Pharisees, a great deal of truth may be held, there may be intellectual clearness of doctrine and the like; all this is within the compass of the flesh, and will be accredited by it. But there is one thing the flesh can never do, it can never trust simply in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life, and have "peace with God."

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of holiness. If truth (the form of it) comes to me without holiness, I cannot receive it as of the Spirit of God, and vice versa, if there be apparent holiness without truth. There is always thus, for the humble believer, a corrective or countercheck, whereby he may detect the evil—Satan's imitation.

But there is another thing testified of—the last form of wickedness—man's will exalting itself against God. The principle has been always the same; but now it will come, out in full development. "The king shall do according to his own will." (Dan. 11:36) Truth having been rejected, this is the result. There will be a public avowal of independence of God—man acting against God, speaking against God; but at the same time exalting himself to be as God: (2 Thess. 2:4) Herein Satan's agency will come out in manifest display. It is not merely the "form of

godliness" (itself ensnaring enough, and liable to lead astray), nor yet even man's will alone; no, it is declared to be a display of the "working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." (vs. 9) Awful passage! And see what follows. When God's patience is exhausted, or rather has no more place, then He, yes, "God" Himself, "shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." (vs. 11) "Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." God says, 'If you love a lie, you shall have a lie.'

His dealings With the Jews, upon their rejection of Him, is the same in principle. "Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes," (Isa. 6; John 12; Acts 28:26,27).

But we find exactly the same testimony given about the profession of Christianity, as about the profession of Judaism. The "mystery of iniquity" had begun to work in Paul's time; "doth already work," says he. It is followed by a "falling away," or apostasy, and consummated in the appearance of antichrist— "that man of sin." Satan's power, seductive power, and man's self-will, in independence of God, will terminate in this: Man given up to the devil. But it will not be until the long-suffering of God has been tried to the uttermost; even as the sentence of judicial blindness on the Jews was pronounced 700 years before put in execution. At the present hour that long-suffering has been 1800 years running on; but when the testimony of truth has been fully rejected, the doom will come.

People may deceive themselves, and say that these things are not to be looked for in a Christian land. It is just there, upon Christendom, that God's heaviest judgments will fall. After testimony God gave over the heathen to a "reprobate mind." (See Rom. 1) The Jew, with his special light, is given over to a fat heart. Where Christianity is professed, it is the same thing; a "form of godliness," "the love of the truth" not received, "pleasure in unrighteousness" —God gives over to "strong delusion."

Men love something. Trace the course of Judas. What was it that led him astray? He loved money, not so uncommon an evil. In this lie was the world's prudent man "men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself." But observe the progress of corrupt nature; a little circumstance in John 12:3-6 may help us to see the connection. The lust there, Satan suggests a way to gratify it. Well, he goes on, And what is his next step? Satan puts it into his heart to betray his Master. Judas, it may be, thinking that the blessed One would have been delivered in some way, as at other times, and thus he get his money, and yet save his character, consents. Man will excuse himself by any folly. Sin has its progress with a defiled conscience. Hypocrisy now enters; he sits with Jesus at the table (goes on with religiousness), even after he had sold him. Mark, too, it was "after the sop" that Satan entered, never nearer to Christ in form. Now he is hardened against even the relentings of nature, he goes out and betrays the Son of Man with a kiss. Here then is the progress of corrupt nature towards this fearful consummation—first, lust; secondly, a means of gratifying it in his office of bearer of the bag; all this goes on along with religiousness, in the very company of Christ, from day to day; thirdly, he is led to the ultimate character of his crime, at a time and in circumstances of most blessing to a true disciple; fourthly, the heart is hardened, so that the betrayal takes place even with a kiss, the token of affection. Sinning and religiousness go on together. Again we say, and here we have an illustration of it, that where the power of godliness is not, nearness to godly things is only the more dangerous.

Well, we have the solemn declaration that such shall be the history of Christendom. “Three unclean spirits go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16)—that day when the long-suffering of God shall have closed, when, in fact, a longer delay would become the allowance of unrighteousness. Judgment will then be according to this nearness. Its full tide will roll in upon Christendom.

We speak not of the judgment of the dead, but of the living. Where, then, is the resource from this dreadful progress and consummation of wickedness, in the place where righteousness is expected? It is not in man’s will, for through that he is the slave of Satan. Nor in forms of religiousness. Satan can enter in with the sop. Neither the one nor the other will keep him out. Man’s natural power, his capacity to do great things, may be vaunted on the one hand; and on the other, a reliance upon ordinances and observances be insisted upon. For a time these may seem the most opposing schools, but a connecting link will be found in man’s corrupt nature, managed by the craft of the great enemy; and at last both will subserve his purposes, who is to “exalt himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped; so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” Where then is deliverance from the evil? where is the escape? The answer is most simple. In the fellowship of God’s love.

The place of special privileges unheeded, of special light, will be the place of special judgment.

A word in passing: Satan does not come all at once and say, ‘I seek to turn you from God.’ He usually works by introducing that which would lead away from simplicity of reliance on the death of Christ—some “form of godliness”—and so ensnares.

How are we to detect all this? In the first place, the believer must be set in heaven (not in body, but in spirit), in the presence of God Himself. That is now his true place. “The way into the holiest of all was not yet manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” God was not, so to speak, then revealed in His own full estimate of good and evil. But now the holiest is open. The veil is rent. “The true light shineth.” There is nothing between us and God. All is worthless that cannot stand in the light of His holiness. There were many things before which God did not approve, but which He permitted—Jewish divorcement, for instance. (Mark 10:5) But at the death of Christ the full light of God’s holiness against the darkness of man’s fully-developed sin was brought out. The veil was rent from top to bottom.

Divine goodness had come into the world, and displayed itself with every witness; what had man shown himself to be? A hater of divine goodness, in deliberate judgment. The full evil of the world, and, in the accomplishment of righteousness for us, the full grace of God, both came out at the cross. All the pains God had taken to reclaim man, as culture to a good-for-nothing tree, only resulted in his bearing more bad fruit, until the deliberate evil of his nature in hatred to God was shown in the death of Christ. This was the climax of his sin. But here also was shown God’s perfect love. Man’s hatred to God—come in goodness, is one side of the cross, and the other, God in His highest act of love towards men in vileness.

God’s own holiness has now come completely out. Since the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is no longer a question of coming up step by step to God. If man stand before God at all, he must stand in contact with the full light of His holiness. How did that light burst forth? In the absolute putting away of the sin of every believer, and that by the worst act of man’s sin. The

very sin that was detected by the light, that would have hindered the soul's approach, was put away through the blow that brought Jesus to the death, and now the sinner stands in the absolute and full enjoyment of God's love. Such is His goodness! Trusting to the perfect work of Christ, the more the searching eye of God rests on me, the more, as it were, does He discover the perfect value of the blood of Christ. The clearer the light, the more is it to show that not a spot or stain is on me. What does He see? the efficacy of the blood of His own provided Lamb—that which hath put away my sin. The same light that detects the sin, manifests its being utterly and forever put away; yea, has burst forth and shone in the putting it away.

Here then is the safeguard. It is the knowledge of God's full putting away of sin—peace through the blood. I can have no thought of getting up to God, when standing where Himself has brought me, even in His very presence.

We are called unto holiness, but what character does Christian holiness take? not the character of our own nature at all, nothing is recognized as of us. It is "that we might be partakers of His holiness." Man's nature has been proved to be incorrigibly bad—it has hated and crucified Christ, God cannot own it, He seeks nothing from it. He has satisfied Himself in the cross about our evil; and now He says, 'Be partakers of My good.' Here again is a safeguard for the saints at the present hour. Those who, through the teaching of the Spirit of God, have learned this great and blessed truth, and through grace walk in fellowship with God, will be preserved from all attempts at creature holiness. They say, 'We want nothing before God, but only to glorify Him in our bodies.' They are as Christ before God, and they know it. Nothing else is wanted; nay, God would repudiate anything else. It would be to call in question the sufficiency of Christ. Faith rests where God rests. What we have to do is to glorify Him by our life down here. But our walk down here is, nevertheless, not our standing before God in righteousness, though it be a testimony in man's sight to it.

Reader, have you rested where God rests? What does God think about Christ? Does your soul say that is sufficient? God rests in Him as having made peace through the blood of the cross. Is that peace consciously yours?

Salvation is the guard set up of God against the deceits of Satan.

John 14

Truly wonderful and infinite is the blessing which is opened out for us in the fourteenth and following chapters of John. I desire to trace it a little.

We will notice first, the commencement of all, the way to the Father, "I am," says Jesus, "the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." No way but through Him—through His blood—the new and living way now made open for us into the holiest of all, even the presence of God. The point of connection between this and verses 1 to 3 being, that they who have access or entrance to the Father by Him have of course entrance also to the Father's house.

We next learn the blessed truth, that by coming through Jesus we not only come to the Father, but we get the Father. "If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth, ye know Him, and have seen Him." The poor weak heart, ignorant of its full blessedness in Jesus, would embody its soul in that language, "Show me the Father, and it sufficeth me." Only let me know that the Father too is mine, and it is enough—it is all. And that satisfaction is nigh at hand: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." We cannot separate between the two; we cannot get Jesus without getting the Father, because the Father was—is—in Jesus. If by faith we have looked upon Jesus crucified and risen for the forgiveness of our sins; if we have thus seen Jesus, we have seen the Father; if we have thus got Jesus, we have got the Father. Too much have these things been separated between, Jesus looked at as an averter between us and an offended God: so that the love of Jesus has been honored, to the disparagement of the love of the Father that gave Him (John 3:16), that raised Him up from the dead when His work was completed, that our faith and our hope might be in God. (1 Peter 1:21)

It was the Father's love that provided the Son's satisfaction; the sheet is let down from Him and takes us back to Him.

Surely therefore here we find full satisfaction. Blessed truth to know that God, even our Father's countenance, ever rests upon us now in love. (2 Cor. 4:6) It can never in reality change. As Christ is, so are we; and His position now is so blessedly opened to us in spirit. (Psa. 21:6) And the Lord says, "Ye know Him." What a nobility there is in the saint. It is not only that our sins are forgiven, and we are in an acceptable relation to Him The poorest saint can say what the proudest, most lofty amongst men cannot say with truth by nature, "I know God." And surely this is eternal life in its truest sense, to know Him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. "I know Him," I suppose, constitutes the full blessing of our portion.

This thought of the union of the Father and the Son brings in another thought, I think; namely, of our union in them. But I will pass on now to preserve more order. The next truth I notice is union with Christ. This is our full joy. "In that day [the Spirit being come] ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." Blessed truth! We may say it is the center truth of God. Union for the church; union for the individual. The church His body; the individual bone of His bone, and

so on. I would notice here that I believe the Spirit is here spoken of as the witness and agent of this our union with the Head, taking verses 17, 18, 20 in connection.

I would notice now what two important truths we have here together—opposite, yet connected. As to our union with Christ, we know, blessed be God! that it does not depend upon our walk and doings; it is settled and secured for us by Him in Christ Jesus. It does not depend upon our frames and feelings. It ever exists. But the realization of that union is closely connected with our walk. “He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them,” says the Lord, “he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” (vs. 21)

Yea, He has something more than manifesting to speak of. He does not come alone in verse 23, but another with Him; and they come to abide. “We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” How important to see these two. That our union is established irrevocably in Him, thus giving full rest to our souls, independent of our works, and yet called so to walk as to have its full joy in us.

This union with Christ brings in another thing which I passed over before, our position here of power as in union with Christ, having the Spirit, “He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall He do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father.” (vs. 12)

Our place now in the world, if we use it aright, is one of power. I do not mean necessarily external power at all; because we are united with Him who is in the place of power, “gone to His Father” (vs. 12), “exalted by the right hand of God,” says Peter (Acts 2:33), “glorified.” (3:13) This was, I judge, a great power of their testimony just then.

I suppose this was quite verified at Pentecost, when the Spirit was given, when three thousand souls were added to them in that day. “The time of power, the demonstration of power, was come, because Jesus was glorified.” Perhaps this thought is a little conveyed to us in the words, “the day of Pentecost was fully come.” The fruits of the seed which He had sown were quickened. Remark in the beautiful connection between Jesus glorified and the Spirit present, the power of our union with Him, “He that believeth on Me... out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:38) And let us remark, this is equally our portion now, though it may be modified in application by apostasy; “we are in union with Jesus, we have the in-dwelling Spirit.” We ought therefore to show forth the power of Him with whom we are in union, that good vine into which we have been grafted. Our power to do this is shown in Jesus. (15:4, 8)

A further way of our power is shown in 14:13; how regulated, 15:7.

When I add to this the teaching of chapter 15, our power of service as in the living vine, our relation to Him as friends, having the full knowledge and communion of His mind “the mind of Christ,” the Spirit’s agency, as “the Revealer” (16:7, 12, 13)—the boundless store that, in consequence of our position, belongs to us (16:14, 15), the simple, naked position of love in which we stand before the Father, so as, in one sense, to need nothing to support us (16:26, 27)—though we know in His wisdom and grace there is something more to support us, quite indispensable, even the priesthood of Christ—and finally, presentation unto Him in glory according to His own will (17:24), we may truly say, “Who hath heard such a thing? who hath known such a thing?” “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things

which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” (1 Cor. 2:9,10)

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