

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 20

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A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 20, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

100 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Christian Truth Volume 20
1. Exposition of 2 Timothy: Chapter 1:1-5
2. Exposition of 2 Timothy: Chapter 1:12-18
3. Exposition of 2 Timothy: Chapter 1:6-7
4. Exposition of 2 Timothy: Chapter 1:8-11
5. Exposition of 2 Timothy: Chapter 2:1-7
6. An Address in 1961: Luke 10
7. An Address in 1961: Part 2
8. The Alabaster Box
9. Am I Still a Child of God?
10. The Apostasy
11. The Approbation of the Lord
12. Are We Naphtalis? Rachel's Son
13. Borrow Not a Few: Faith's Warrant
14. Brazen Altar, Brazen Laver, Gold Altar
15. A Bunch of Grapes: Several Quotes
16. Capital Punishment
17. Christ Dying for the Ungodly
18. Christian Devotedness: Part 1
19. Christian Devotedness: Part 2
20. Christian Joys
21. Christian Position, What Is It?
22. Counsels to Young Christians
23. Current Events: Four Anniversaries
24. Dayspring From on High
25. The Disappointments of Life: Found in Darby's Bible
26. The Everlasting Arms
27. Faith
28. The Faithful Jewess
29. First Love Abandoned
30. The Forsaken One
31. The Friendship of the World
32. Genesis 49:22
33. The Glory of That Light
34. The Glory That Excelleth
35. Godly Sensibilities Without Godly Energy: Genesis 27
36. The Gold Wire: Exodus 39:3
37. The Grace of Christ
38. He Will Be With Thee

39. Hearing and Following
40. The Heart of the Scriptures
41. Heavenly Streams: Fresh Hearts
42. Hurry, Worry, Wait
43. Behold, I Come Quickly
44. In All Thy Ways
45. Incidents in the Life of Gideon: Part 1
46. Incidents in the Life of Gideon: Part 2
47. Israel: the Land and the People
48. Jesus Himself
49. John 6:56-58
50. Life and Times of Josiah: Part 5
51. Life and Times of Josiah: Part 6
52. Life and Times of Josiah: Part 7
53. The King in His Beauty: Psalm 45
54. On Knowing God's Will
55. Their Latter End
56. The Lord's Day and the Sabbath
57. Manoah's Wife
58. Man's Heart and God's Heart
59. Marah
60. Mary and Martha
61. Middle East Turbulence
62. The Morning Star
63. Moses
64. Moses' Loss of Canaan
65. The Prophet Obadiah
66. The Old Prophet of Bethel
67. Picture of a Life
68. The Proverbs: Chapter 20:1-21:8
69. The Proverbs: Chapter 21:9-22:14
70. The Proverbs: Chapter 22:15-23:18
71. The Proverbs: Chapter 23:19-24:26
72. The Proverbs: Chapter 24:27-25:28
73. The Proverbs: Chapter 26:1-27:13
74. Rahab
75. Rejoice Evermore
76. The Risen One
77. Scripture Notes: Isaiah 45:23
78. Scripture Notes: John 2:17
79. The Secret of the Lord
80. Self-Surrender: Part 1

- 81.** Self-Surrender: Part 2
- 82.** Service
- 83.** Service Begins in Little Things
- 84.** Seven "Precious" Statements
- 85.** The Shadow of Thy Wings
- 86.** Should a Christian Make a Vow?
- 87.** Spiritual Slothfulness
- 88.** The Sufferings of Christ
- 89.** Trophimus the Invalid
- 90.** The Tongue
- 91.** Trust in Him at All Times
- 92.** The Urgency of Grace
- 93.** The Watcher and the Holy One
- 94.** Watching and Waiting
- 95.** The Way of the Love of Jesus
- 96.** What Is It to Quench the Spirit?
- 97.** What Is Our Power for Walk?
- 98.** Women's Place in Service
- 99.** Be Ye Steadfast, Unmoveable

Christian Truth Volume 20

Exposition of 2 Timothy: Chapter 1:1-5

There is a great and felt difference between the first and second epistles to Timothy. The former contemplates the assembly in its pristine order, with everything regulated by the divine word; the latter deals with the path of the faithful in a time of confusion and departure from the truth. There are two verses which express this difference. In the first, the Apostle writes of the "house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15); whereas in the second, he has to speak of some "Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure," etc. (2 Tim. 2:18, 19.)

This was now the consolation that, if confusion reigned in the house of God, if vessels to dishonor had become mingled with the vessels to honor, the foundation, laid of God Himself, was immovable. Still it must have been an unspeakable sorrow to the Apostle to behold the outward decay and corruption of Christianity, the almost open departure of the Church from the holy ground on which he, by the grace of God, had been enabled to plant it. In truth it was an exhibition of what has been seen in every age and in every dispensation; namely, the failure of that which had been entrusted to the responsible hands of men. For if Christ, on the one hand, builds the Church, and builds that, as He surely does, which is imperishable and indestructible, He, on the other hand, permits His servants to build also; and many of these as surely build up upon the foundation wood, hay, stubble (1 Cor. 3), and thereby the outward form and presentation of the house of God are corrupted. This, as we have said, had already taken place in the days of the Apostle; and in this epistle he not only expresses the feelings of his own heart with respect to this sorrowful state of things, but he is also led to give such directions as avail for the guidance and conduct of exercised souls in the midst of the prevalent disorders.

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

He was, moreover, Apostle by the will of God. This, and nothing less than this, was the ground and source of his office. Called by the Lord Himself, he was called by the will of God; and this certainty in his soul was the secret of his courage and devotedness in the Lord's service. (Compare Josh. 1:9.) And if by the will of God, it was "according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." The truth may be departed from, and the testimony be consequently surrendered, but the life which is in Christ Jesus--eternal life-is indestructible, as it is also outside of and above all question of failure

or corruption.

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

"To Timothy, my dearly beloved son," etc., more exactly, "[my] beloved child." In the first epistle, Paul names him, "[my] true child in the faith" (J.N.D. Trans.), thus pointing him out as one that walked in his own footsteps in regard to the truth; here it is the expression of his own heart for the one who, as a son with his father, had served with Paul in the gospel. In truth, the heart of the Apostle clung to Timothy at such a moment of sorrow; and his pouring out his heart in this way became the basis of the appeals and exhortations he was about to address to his beloved child. This is divine in its method, for it is ever God's way to reveal the depth of His affections for the saints before giving to them words of guidance or admonition. (See 1 Cor. 1, and Col. 3:12-17.)

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

Verses 4, 5. First, in thanking God, the Apostle makes the remarkable statement, "Whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience." He had said the same thing in effect when standing before the sanhedrin (Acts 23:1; see also 24:16); and it is necessary to seize the true import of these words. That his forefathers had been godly persons is manifest, as also that they had been distinguished by a conscientious observance of the law, walking according to the light they had received, being governed by the Word as far as they comprehended it. And this, as we understand, is what Paul here affirms of himself, that while he was in Judaism he maintained a good conscience, did not permit himself any known violations of the law, being even then, as "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. 3:6). But this has nothing to say as to the state of his heart when a Jew; only he insists that he preserved, until of course the light

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

The subject of the Apostle's thanksgiving is, "that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day." It is a striking way to put it, one that would not ordinarily be adopted by saints, because perhaps we are less mindful than he was, that we are entirely indebted to the grace of God for power to remember anyone incessantly in prayer. Paul therefore gives thanks that he had been able to bear up Timothy before the Lord—a sure sign, too, it may be added, inasmuch as he penned these words under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that Timothy needed his prayers, and thus that Paul was in communion as to him with the mind of God.

Then follow expressions which reveal the Apostle's fervent affection for his beloved child in the faith; "Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy." v. 4. Recalling Timothy's affection inflames his own; and while expressing it, consolation is doubtless ministered to his own heart. The occasion of Timothy's tears is not revealed; but it was probably at the time of some separation, bidding him farewell, it may be, when leaving him in captivity, as he departed to his own service. Whenever it might have been, it plainly shows that the affection of Paul was fully reciprocated, and that it was no common tie that knit together the hearts of these two servants of the Lord. It was the recollection of this parting, combined with his own ardent love, that led him to desire to see Timothy that he might be filled with joy; for to him the Apostle could unburden his heart, and be refreshed in the enjoyment of Timothy's love and fellowship. Many a servant, in times of declension, has thus learned the sweetness and encouragement of real heart fellowship concerning the work of the Lord.

Then, putting Timothy in this respect in a similar position to his own in relation to his ancestors, he adds, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded in thee also." v. 5. The position is similar, but it is not, as in Paul's case, a good conscience, but "unfeigned faith"; for Timothy had no Jewish ancestry, for his father was a Greek. And hence, though his mother was a Jewess, he was unclean according to the Jewish law. He is thus traced back only to the commencement of the Christian faith in his family, which dated from his grandmother.

It is a beautiful picture, drawn for our instruction; for we learn from this same epistle that Timothy from a child had known (and who can doubt, through the teaching of these pious women, or at least his mother?) the Holy Scriptures. Both the grandmother and mother, as well as Timothy, had embraced the Christian faith; and the Apostle seems to regard this fact as proving the greater reality of "the faith" in Timothy's soul, and as laying him, as will afterward be seen, under all the more solemn obligation of faithfulness to the Lord in this loose and corrupt epoch of the Church. The reflection cannot but be evoked from the mind of every reader, that it is a priceless blessing to have godly parents, and such godly parents as seek to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The judgment seat of Christ alone will reveal how much Timothy was indebted, in the grace of God, to the instructions of his mother Eunice. May such parents ever abound in the Church of God!

Exposition of 2 Timothy: Chapter 1:12-18

In the preceding verse the Apostle explains that he had been appointed (not of man, as he informs the Galatians, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead) as the herald and apostle of the gospel; and now he speaks of the consequences of his mission as to himself, together with his sustainment and consolation: "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." His present sufferings were those resulting from his captivity (v. 8), and from the opposition now everywhere encountered by the gospel, as also from being deserted by so many professed believers, and perhaps teachers (v. 15). And he regards these sufferings as flowing out from the position he occupied in reference to the gospel (chap. 2:9); that is to say, the faithful prosecution of his mission entailed upon him these sorrows and persecutions.

Nor could it be otherwise at such a moment, nor indeed at any moment. For wherever a servant of the Lord seeks to serve Him alone, and to cling to His Word in spite of all opposition, against that man will be arrayed all the forces of the enemy. It was so with Paul, so that (as he tells us in the next chapter) he suffered trouble in the work of the gospel as an evildoer, even unto bonds, therein following, if at a distance, the footsteps of his Master, who suffered unto death, and that the death of the cross, because of His fidelity, perfect fidelity, as God's witness on the earth.

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

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

attention. The form of sound words is rather an outline - an outline of the truth in the inspired words which Timothy had heard from the Apostle. Elsewhere Paul affirms that his teaching was "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which [in the words which] the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1 Cor. 2:13). He thus claimed inspiration, not only for the matter, but also for the words in which his apostolic communications were made; and hence it is, as another has said, that we are never sure we have the truth unless we have the very language which contains it.

In a day when rationalism and infidelity (both springing from the same root, the latter being but the full development of man's reason) are seeking to pervert the foundations of God's revelation to man in the Scriptures, it is necessary to reassert the truth which the Apostle affirms; for the infallible certainty of the Word of God is the only rock on which the soul can securely repose amid the changing sea of the speculations of man's wandering mind.

It is for this reason that Paul exhorts Timothy to have an outline of Scripture teaching in inspired words, that he might ever be prepared to authoritatively instruct the enquirer, or to confute the adversary. The difference between this that Paul pressed on Timothy and creed lies in this: Timothy's outline was to be in divine words, whereas the creeds of Christendom are expressed in human language; and on this very account they fail, even when "orthodox," to express the full truth of revelation. Timothy's outline was inspired without any human admixture; the creeds are composed by human minds, taking Scripture, as far as their authors understood it, as the basis, and given in the words of man's wisdom.

Paul had taught Timothy, as already said, in divine words; and these words were to be used by him in the way directed, forming a compendium in scriptural language of Christian doctrine, as there were but few New Testament scriptures at that time in existence. Timothy then was to have and to hold fast the form of sound words; but if he was enjoined to do this, the manner in which it was to be done is also given. It was to be "in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Dissociate even the truth from Christ, and it will become a dead thing; use it apart from faith and love, and it will be a powerless weapon.

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

If Timothy was to hold fast the objective truth, there was also another thing he was to keep; namely, "that good thing... committed unto thee." In verse 12 the Apostle had said that he was persuaded that the One whom he had believed was able to keep that which he had committed to Him against that day. Literally, it is "my deposit"; and in verse 14 the rendering should be "the good deposit keep," etc. If on the the one hand we have a "deposit" (all our hopes of glory) with Christ, He on the other hand entrusts His servants with a deposit. The question then is, What is

this good deposit? It cannot be eternal life, or salvation; for the keeping of this belongs to Christ Himself, and hence it is probably the truth -the truth as committed to the stewardship of His servants- to be maintained by them in all fidelity while serving in the prospect of that day. (Compare 1 Tim. 6:13, 14.)

Timothy's gift was also a deposit, and that, as we have seen, he was to hold and use in the service of his Master; but the connection here points rather to the interpretation we have given. And, indeed, unless we guard, and carefully guard, the truth in our own souls, we shall never be able to use it rightly in service. It is thus the first thing, in connection with the whole armor of God, that the loins should be girt about with truth (Eph. 4). If, therefore, we would be faithful witnesses for Christ in a day of declension, the truth must first have its rightful place over our own hearts and consciences, and must be jealously watched over and guarded if the witness-bearing is to be continued. The Apostle reminds Timothy that the only power for this is the Holy Ghost, and also that he already possessed that power. "Keep," he says, "by the Holy Ghost which dwells in us, the good deposit" (J.N.D. Trans.). It is well to remember that if the Lord send us on any service, or if He set us for the defense of the truth in a day of difficulty, He has given us a power that is equal to all the demands that can be made upon us. We are too often occupied with the sense of our own feebleness, instead of with the power possessed through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle turns again to his own circumstances; but if he does so, it is but to bring out into bright relief the contrast between unfaithfulness and fidelity, as also to teach us how precious the latter is to God. First, we have the dark side: "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." v. 15. It was through Paul's preaching that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10); and thus they were, in no small degree, his debtors. But now, together with the aged and devoted Apostle's being in prison, they had lost their first love; the fervency of their zeal had cooled, and they had become ashamed of God's chosen vessel of the truth. It was not that they were not really Christians, nor, perhaps, that they had become open backsliders, much less apostates; but they were not prepared to suffer from identification with the rejected servant. They had undoubtedly fallen in with the course of this age, and would thus be tempted to regard Paul as an extreme man, as too exclusive, as an enthusiast, as one who imperiled the progress of Christianity by his fanaticism. They thus turned away from him, seeking smoother paths, where the cross would be lighter.

Two names of those who forsook Paul are given-Phygellus and Hermogenes-and the fact that their names are given shows that they were well known, probably leaders among the saints-those, therefore, who would lend a sanction to this unfaithful course. It may be that the teaching of these men had adapted itself to the currents of the moment; for the tendencies of any age always find expression through some who claim the place of teachers. Be this as it may, it was a sad spectacle-public Christianity, that is, the outward form of it in this world, severing itself from the chosen vessel of the truth! On the other hand, there is no grander sight than that of Paul-deserted, alone, in captivity-retaining through grace his confidence in the Lord, and in the truth committed to his charge. If faint, he was still pursuing; and if he were weary in his lonely conflict, his hand still clave to his sword (see 2 Sam. 23:10).

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

The gratitude of the Apostle's heart turned into a prayer for Onesiphorus. "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well." vv. 16-18.

The Apostle's prayer embraces a present and a future blessing. He desires present mercy for the house of Onesiphorus; that is, he prays for the members of Onesiphorus' family, of his household indeed, and also that the Lord would grant Onesiphorus himself to find mercy from "the Lord in that day." "That day" refers to the Lord's appearing (see v. 12), when He will display His own in glory, and when the recompense, in grace, of each of His servants will likewise be exhibited. Onesiphorus had already been the object of mercy in his salvation; but, as passing through the wilderness, he was "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21). And it is this, mercy in its full fruit and consummation, that Paul prays he may find in that day.

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

Exposition of 2 Timothy: Chapter 1:6-7

Chapter 1:6, 7

The expression of the Apostle's heart to Timothy, as well as his longing desire to see him, is but preparatory to the appeal contained in verses 6-8. It is indeed the groundwork on which he builds up his exhortations. He thus drew the heart of Timothy to himself, to prepare him to receive his message. "Wherefore," he says, "I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." v. 6.

By the light of the first epistle we may understand the whole history of Timothy's gift. In chapter 1 we find that he had been pointed out as a chosen vessel of gift by prophecies (of course, in the assembly), and that Paul accordingly committed to him a "charge." Chapter 4:14 further teaches that the bestowment of the gift, "given thee by prophecy," was accompanied by "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery"; and now we learn that it was the Apostle himself, "the presbytery" being associated with him, who was the instrument or channel appointed by the Head of the Church for the actual communication of the gift to Timothy. It is the ascended Christ who, having led captivity captive, gave, and still gives, gifts to men, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. And Timothy was honored, in the sovereign favor of God, in being made a vessel for the blessing of the saints. It is of this he is reminded by the Apostle, and charged at the same time to "stir up" the gift of God.

Previously he had been warned not to "neglect" it (1 Tim. 4:14); now he is more urgently exhorted on the same subject. This points to a common danger. When there is a real action of the Spirit of God among the saints, when His power is demonstrated in edification and restoration, or in conversion, the ministry of the Word is welcomed and appreciated. But in times of coldness, indifference, and apostasy, the saints will not endure sound teaching, but after their own lusts they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they will turn away from the truth (chap. 4:3, 4).

Then comes the danger to the servant of the Lord. Seeing that his ministry is no longer received, he is tempted to retire, to lapse into silence, or to resolve with Jeremiah not to speak any more in the Lord's name to the people (Jer. 20:9). As knowing the heart and the tendency of Timothy, Paul provides against this snare by urging; him to rouse himself, and to stir up by constant use the gift he had received for the correction and edification of the Lord's people. The greater the confusion and departure from the truth, the greater the need for a real and living ministry; but in order to maintain this, the servant must learn to draw his strength and courage, not from the faces of the people, but from abiding and secret communion with the Lord.

If the Lord, through His Apostle, summons Timothy to more diligent service, He also draws his attention to the source of his power. "For," continues the Apostle, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." v. 7. The first clause, which might be rendered the spirit of "cowardice," reveals Timothy's especial weakness. He evidently was a man,

like Jeremiah, of a timid, shrinking spirit - one who only with difficulty, unless under the sway of the Holy Spirit, could face dangers and opponents. But while the servant of the Lord "must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient" (chap. 2:24), he must be also as bold as a lion in the defense of the truth, and in maintaining the honor of his Lord. Timothy is therefore taught that the spirit God gives is not one of fear or cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

These are three remarkable words, and they require a little examination. First, it is a spirit of power; for if God bestows gift, He gives also the power to exercise it; that is, it should be added, if there is the state of soul for its use.

It is indeed of the last importance to remember the connection between state of soul and the power of the Spirit. The gift may abide even in one who is unfaithful or indifferent; but the power to use it will not be present unless its possessor is walking in dependence upon God, unless he lives in the acknowledgment that power is outside of himself, and in the realization of his own utter weakness. This is the Apostle's point: "God," he says, "hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power." If therefore the servant, and Timothy was to learn it, is animated with fear or timidity, he should know that this is not the spirit God gives, for His Spirit is one of power.

These two things are to be noted - the source of the power, and the character of the spirit given. Moreover, the spirit is also "of love." The Apostle follows in this the same order as in 1 Corinthians. In chapter 12 he speaks of spiritual manifestations in the assembly; and, at the end of the chapter, of workers of miracles, gifts of healing, and speaking with tongues - all of which are connected with displays of power.

And then in the next chapter, he proceeds to speak of love, teaching that if anyone spoke with the tongues of men and angels, and had not love, he would become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; for in truth divine power can only be wielded by the Spirit, through a divine nature; for of this it is that love is the expression. The flesh, man's sinful nature, can never be used in the Lord's service; and thus power and love - divine, holy love - can never be dissociated. There will also be, as a consequence of love, a sound mind, or, as it has been translated, "a wise discretion"; for when governed by the Spirit of God, the servant will always exhibit divine wisdom in his work, and be kept in quiet control and subduedness in the presence of God. He will know when to speak and when to be silent, when to be in season and when to be out of season; for he will be maintained in communion with the mind of his Lord.

Exposition of 2 Timothy: Chapter 1:8-11

Such being the characteristics of the spirit God gives to His servants, the Apostle proceeds to exhortation: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." v. 8.

There is, perhaps, an implied contrast in this exhortation; thus, many are becoming ashamed of the testimony (see v. 15), but be not thou ashamed. And the danger, as before indicated, might have beset Timothy at this moment when almost all were turning aside, and when the elect vessel of the testimony was a poor despised prisoner. It is a remarkable fact that, so early in the history of the Church, as once before indeed at Antioch when Paul withstood Peter to the face, the maintenance of the truth of God depended upon the faithfulness of one man, and he a captive. Courage, and such courage as God alone could give, was requisite at such a crisis, that the spirit of power which alone could enable Timothy to stem the adverse currents that were sweeping by him on every side with such velocity and force. Did he waver at this time in his allegiance to the testimony of the Lord? God only knows; but we may be sure that this fervent, pleading exhortation reached him at the needed moment.

Mark, too, that the vessel of the testimony is identified with the testimony; for the Apostle adds, "nor of me His prisoner." Many profess to hold and to love the truth, while they would fain stand apart from those to whom the testimony is committed. But this can never be, as our passage shows, according to the mind of God; and hence it would have been as displeasing to Him, if Timothy had been ashamed of Paul, as if he had been ashamed of the testimony. Or to put it still more strongly, to have been ashamed of Paul, being what he was, would have been to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord.

There is however more: not only was he not to be ashamed either of the message or the messenger, but he was also to be fully and openly identified with both. "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." Another translation will bring out more clearly the Apostle's meaning: "Suffer evil along with the gospel." The gospel is in a way personified, and Timothy is urged to cast in his lot with it fully and entirely, at whatever cost, that the reproaches which might fall upon it might also be borne by him (compare Rom. 15:3); and the significant words are added, to encourage him in this course, "according to the power of God," the power which God bestows upon His servants to sustain them in the presence of the adversary, and to maintain His truth in the face of all danger; for no human energy, no steadfastness of purpose, nothing short of divine power, will avail in the conflicts of service in the gospel.

The mention of the power of God leads the Apostle back and upward to the source of all the blessing which was flowing out through the gospel; namely, to God's purpose and grace, as the immutable foundation on which God was working, and as the assurance that no efforts of the enemy could frustrate the accomplishment of the thoughts of God. "Who hath saved us," he says, "and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest

by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality [incorruptibility, it should be rendered] to light through the gospel." vv. 9, 10.

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

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

Exposition of 2 Timothy: Chapter 2:1-7

The connection of this chapter with that which precedes it is both intimate and striking. The Apostle was led to depict his circumstances and his situation in the darkest colors; for in truth nothing could be gloomier to the outward eye than the outlook at that moment. He himself was a prisoner, and "all they which are in Asia" had turned away from him. It was therefore a grave crisis in the history of Christianity, and one in which divine wisdom was required to guide aright the feet of the faithful. What then are the counsels which, at such a time, the Apostle gives to his "son" Timothy? First, he says, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." v. 1. It is not what most would have expected. At a time when so many were turning their backs upon God's chosen vessel of the truth, surely some degree of severity, some little sharpness, would be advisable to recall the saints to a sense of their responsibility before God in acknowledging the authority of His servant. Such might have been the thoughts of man; the thoughts of God were of another kind. Timothy was to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus -the grace given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began -that grace of which Christ in His incarnation and death, was and is the expression, and which is stored up in Him (see 2 Cor. 8:9). This is full of instruction.

But how was Timothy to be strong in grace? The word is the same, for example, as that found in Phil. 4:13, and this will supply the key to its interpretation. It means that he was to be strengthened inwardly by this grace, so that he would be best prepared to stand in an evil day, and to cope with its prevailing evils. There is no weapon we are so often tempted to lay aside as grace; but we learn here that it is in proportion to outward decay, unfaithfulness, and corruption, that we need to be built up, fortified by it, in order to deal effectually with the difficulties of the path. The man of God himself therefore must be continually established in grace, as well as be unfailing in its presentation as the mightiest means, in the power of the Holy Ghost, both to confirm the wavering and to recover the backslider.

In the next place, he says, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." v. 2. This remarkable instruction is very significant. It shows clearly that no further revelation was to be expected, and that the provision contemplated, as a barrier against the inroads of false doctrines and pernicious errors, was the transmission of the truth as it had been received of the Apostle (and certified to be apostolic teaching by many witnesses) to faithful men who should be competent to hand it on unadulterated to others.

Not a hint is given of any successors of the apostles, or of any authority whatever in the Church, to whom an appeal might be made to define the truth and to expose false doctrines. The Apostle's confidence is in God and the word of His grace (see Acts 20:32); only he would have Timothy to be diligent in imparting the truth to such as would be thereby qualified to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. The waves of error were already rolling in from every quarter, and the inspired Apostle urges his beloved Timothy to raise up in this manner breakwaters to intercept their force, and to guard the saints from their destructive power. So now our safety is to

be found first in building ourselves up on our most holy faith, and then in diligently instructing the saints, that they may know how to discern between truth and error, and thus to detect the artifices of the adversary.

The Apostle proceeds to insist upon some necessary personal qualifications for the work to which Timothy was called: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth, himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits." vv. 3-6. Every servant of the Lord should ponder, and ponder again and again in the presence of God, these grave and weighty words-words which will never lose their solemn force as long as laborers are found in the Lord's work. First then the servant must know how to endure hardness, for such must be expected by every "good soldier of Jesus Christ." None knew this better than he who penned these words, who, after recounting his persecutions and dangers, adds, "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." 2 Cor. 11:27. If therefore he exhorted Timothy to take his share in suffering, he had himself trodden the path, and thus does but encourage him to follow in the same steps. And where is the servant, it may be inquired, who does not need this admonition? To shun the cross is a common temptation, and it is only when we are under the power of the constraining love of Christ, with a single eye to His glory, that we are impelled to a joyful identification with the sorrows and sufferings of His interests here upon the earth.

The figure employed institutes a comparison. A soldier on service expects to endure "hardness," and so also should the soldiers of Christ. The Apostle therefore adds, that no man that warreth entangles himself with the affairs of this life. He makes arrangements, on the other hand, to lay aside all his business responsibilities that he may be absolutely free from all other claims so as to be at the absolute disposal of his commander. Are the soldiers of Christ to be on any lower level? Are they to seek to serve two masters? Are they to engage only in the conflict when they can spare time from other engagements? Most blessed is it when busy men devote their leisure to the Lord's work, preferring His interests to their own ease and comfort; but the Apostle speaks here of another class of servants who, in the power of the Holy Ghost, disengage themselves from every human claim because they desire to please, to be under the absolute control of, the Captain of their salvation. It will be a sad day for the Church and for the saints when such are no longer found, and a sure sign of the decay of the energy of the Holy Ghost in their midst.

Another figure is next introduced for further instruction. In the olden games and contests, those who strove were bound to observe the rules, if they would obtain the prize. So likewise those who engage in the Lord's conflicts have to remember that they must "strive lawfully," be in subjection to His conditions of service, which must be carried on in conformity to His will and His Word. This is of the utmost importance; for many a right thing is done, even by otherwise good soldiers of Jesus Christ, in a wrong manner or at a wrong moment, whereby the end is defeated. The Lord's servants must wait entirely upon the Lord's will, both for the time and the mode of their warfare, or they will not gain the crown of His approval. Nowhere is this more plainly taught than in the siege of Jericho. To human eyes the manner of conducting it, the method of warfare, was nothing but folly; but it was the Lord's way (and "the foolishness of God is wiser than men"), and the victory was assured.

In addition, the husbandman (and this introduces yet another comparison) must first labor before he can partake of the fruits. Our Lord reminded His disciples of the same principle when He said, "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." John 4:36. It is indeed a universal law, that labor must be expended before the harvest can be enjoyed; and it is this which Paul recalled to the mind of Timothy. The tendency of all, and especially of the Lord's servants, is to forget this salutary truth in the intense desire to gather in and feast upon the fruit. It should therefore be remembered, and thereby we should be saved from many disappointments, that now is the time of labor, and that it will be the time of labor until the Lord's return, and hence that our only concern should be to be found diligent and faithful in our service. The time of partaking of the fruit is future, and the knowledge of this will encourage our hearts to persevere in service, and all the more in that our enjoyment of the fruit will be in communion with the Lord. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall, doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Psalm 126:6.

The Apostle, having placed these things before Timothy, urges them upon his attention: "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." v. 7. If we take these words as they stand, they contain an exhortation and a prayer, or at least the expression of a strong desire, which directs Timothy at the same time to the Lord as the source of the power to understand divine things. It would seem, however, as stated below, that the better reading is, "The Lord shall give thee understanding in all things." This gives a slightly different, though very important, meaning. While equally reminding Timothy of his dependence on the Lord for power to apprehend His mind, it gives also a connection between considering, or thinking upon, the apostolic communications, and the action of the Lord in opening his mind to understand Paul's inspired words. And this connection always subsists. The more we consider, weigh, meditate upon the Scriptures, the greater will be the activity of the Holy Spirit in unfolding their teachings to our souls. It is indeed when we are occupied with the Word of God in calm and peace, in the presence of God, that the Lord draws near and gives us understanding; and hence this exhortation to Timothy. It is therefore not by the application of the mind, but by the operation of the Holy Spirit, that divine things are entered into and understood- a lesson much needed in a day of mental activity and intellectual research.

This exhortation would seem to be a connecting link between verses 6 and 8, and applies therefore to that which precedes as well as to that which follows.

An Address in 1961: Luke 10

Luke 10, reading from verse 38: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but, one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

We are going to talk about a very delightful subject this afternoon, with the Lord's help-one that we all have enjoyed many times-a character God has seen fit to mention by name. In fact, this name is a very common one in the New Testament. The name is Mary. There are many Marys brought before us, but this afternoon we want to talk about Mary of Bethany. She has a delightful place wherever we find her mentioned in the New Testament. Evidently she lived in a little village, called Bethany, about two miles east of Jerusalem, at the foot of the Mount of Olives. What a historical spot it was! Think of the wonderful events we find connected with that spot in Scripture! It was from that very place that the feet of Jesus stood last and whence He departed, as the disciples watched. Him disappear into heaven. And again those same blessed feet are going to stand on that same mountain at the close of the tribulation week, as He returns to take over the Kingdom.

And was there any other place on earth where our Lord found Himself so at rest and at home? Was there anywhere else such a delightful atmosphere as He found in this home at Bethany? The name itself means (according to which dictionary you consult) "a house of dates." This speaks of sustenance, food, or of sweetness, does it not? Another dictionary says the name means "house of affliction." Inasmuch as we find from other portions of the Word of God that this house in Bethany was the home of Simon the leper, we can understand how it could be the "house of affliction." For evidently at some time, whether at this time or previously, there had been plenty of sorrow in that home. The house of affliction and the house of dates. Is there any contradiction? No, there is not! Why? Is it not true that the greatest blessings you and I have ever had in our lives have not been from our times of great physical prosperity, but from our times of trial, our sorrows, our disappointments? And we will never know until we get to heaven how much we owe to the discipline that a loving God has seen fit to pass us through, here in this scene.

Some of you who are here this afternoon are in the "teenage" group. But I dare say that even now, you have tasted of sorrow, perhaps some of you very deeply. You do not have to be in this world very long before you find out that sorrow is part of the warp and woof of this life. Yes, even though we are believers, we do not escape passing through the valley of sorrows here.

But the Lord loved to retreat that short distance out to the foot of the Mount of Olives and away from the crowds and busy life; just (if I may say it reverently) to relax in that lovely atmosphere of Bethany. Well, here we have Him. He entered into the house of a woman named Martha. She received Him into her home. Is it not nice when we can receive the Lord Jesus into our home? And

it is nice if we can ask Him not to just pay an occasional visit, but to be a permanent guest. I trust all of us here have not only received Him into our hearts, but into our homes as well. Martha received Him into her home because she wanted Him. Do you want Him? Do you like to have Him there all the time? That is rather searching. If He is there all the time, will it not affect our conversation, our activities? She received Him into her house. No doubt she had received Him into her heart before this. Now she has Him in her house.

Verse 39: "And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word." There are two of them now.

Here we find Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus. What a lovely place to be! Have you been there? If you are a Christian, you have! If you are not a Christian, you have not been there. I would advise you, though you may not be very old- five, six, seven, or ten years old-if you have not yet been at the feet of Jesus, if you have not knelt there to confess to Him that you are a sinner and need a Savior, I advise you to do it. You do not have to be very old to fall at the feet of Jesus.

Mary was sitting at His feet and hearing His word, but Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him and said, "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" There is nothing wrong about serving; somebody has to do it. But in what spirit do we do it? Did you do something for the Lord today? Did you try to serve Him? Fine! But we may ask, In what spirit did you do it? Was your service like that of Martha? She was cumbered with much serving and found fault with her dear sister because she was not helping her as much as she thought that she should. She missed the Lord's mind in being cumbered about her serving; and she missed the Lord's mind in finding fault with her sister. Do you have some little service in the assembly that is yours for Christ? Have you been happy in it? Well and good! Do not think that because you are a Mrs. or Miss that you are excused from responsibility in the assembly. We cannot overestimate the value of a godly sister in the assembly. I have known some outstanding examples of sisters who were a benediction to the meeting where they functioned. You have an important place in the assembly as well as brothers. Seek God's mind as to what it is. And if you have found some little service for Christ, are you doing it happily, or are you complaining that it is all left for you, and someone else is not doing his share? We are prone to do that. Why not do our little bit for the Lord and leave it with Him? And let your brother or sister do the same.

Martha rebuked the Lord Jesus: "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" It is getting pretty bold when one rebukes the Lord Jesus. She was reproaching Him because He would sit there and let her sister, sit at His feet while she did the work. On the face of it, it might look as though Martha was right. But when we get the whole story, we know that she was absolutely wrong. She was losing the blessing to which she was entitled, by allowing her bad spirit to rob her service of its value in His sight. So Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." If we had been evaluating that situation, we would have made the same blunder that Martha did. The Lord reads the heart, and knew what was going on, so He showed Martha her judgment was wrong. He did not just say, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things," but added, "one thing is needful." Oh, yes, there was something that was needful in dear Martha's life. Mary had chosen the good part. It was not Mary that was wrong, but Martha who was wrong. "Mary hath chosen that

good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

What will you and I have the privilege of doing in heaven? We read in Luke 12 that when He gets us all home in the Father's house, and surrounds Himself with all His family, He prepares a supper and will say, Sit down at My table. And He will gird Himself and come forth and serve us. Will not this, then, be the fulfillment of Heb. 2:13? "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me." There we will be, so to speak, sitting at His feet, hearing His word, and enjoying the service of love which He will bestow upon us. That is the reason that the Lord Jesus said to Martha, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." She can take that to heaven. But poor Martha cannot take her pots and pans; her dishes and her bustling work; she cannot take them to heaven with her.

Beloved saints, do we spend any time sitting at His feet and hearing His Word? Or are we like Martha-too busy? Do you read your Bible? Or is it neglected? You know the best seller in the world-the greatest Book in the world so far as circulation is concerned-is the Bible. Millions of copies are made. The printing presses of the world are humming away, turning out Bibles. More and more still need to be printed. Oh, yes, it is the most widely printed Book in the world. You may wonder if it is the most widely read Book in the world. I suppose it is, but it could be far more so. It is hardly respectable today to have a home without a Bible in it. If you were to go into a home and say, "Please bring me a Bible, I want to show you a verse," the person would be embarrassed if he could not produce a copy of the Scriptures. It is an essential part of every well-equipped home. But, beloved, that does not mean that we are reading it!

Do you have a regular time when you read God's Word in the home? I believe we need to emphasize the need for the "family altar." It is the time when we gather the family around the Word of God and read it leisurely, not hastily; meditate upon it, and get a message for our own souls; daily sit there at the feet of Jesus, as it were, and then kneel in prayer. It is a wholesome thing for our souls.

Have you chosen that good part? Or do you prefer to sit down with a current magazine and cuddle up in a comfortable chair and spend an hour or two reading? And what about the Bible? Does it look as good as new, or is it well thumbed? I like to mark a Bible. Beloved saints of God, let us read the precious Word! We are going to be occupied with it a million years from tonight. "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven." Yes, there is a certain sense in which we are going to take our Bibles to heaven with us.

Now, let us turn over to see this dear woman, Mary, again. In John 11: "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)" Notice how carefully the Scripture points out this Mary, because it might have been another Mary. There are at least four other Marys mentioned in the New Testament. The Scripture is very careful to tell us which Mary this was. "It was that Mary."

"Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." See, they had a brother, Lazarus, who was ill; so these sisters sent for the Lord. You can understand that. He had been there so often; He was such a welcome visitor; they knew His power, His love, His concern. So when Lazarus became ill they instinctively sent for the Lord. When you are in a crisis,

whether physical or otherwise, do you instinctively think of the Lord, or do you think of some human relief? Do you bring the Lord Jesus into all the circumstances of your life? Your family? Your work? I believe we have the right to. He is interested in every detail of your life and of mine. So, they send to Jesus. Lovely! They send to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Why did they not invite Him to come, or say, "Lord, come quickly, Lazarus is sick"? It was because they counted on the love that was in His heart! They knew that if they told Him that Lazarus was sick, He would come. They counted on it! Do we know His heart well enough to do that? Do we presume on His love for us? These women did! They said, "He whom Thou lovest is sick." Oh, the affection which is in the heart of Christ! It was not, "He whom Thou hast met," or "whom Thou knowest," but, "he whom Thou lovest is sick." If we only knew the love there is in the heart of Christ for each of us!

"When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." It was a rather odd statement, since the sequel shows that Lazarus was suffering from a fatal illness. Yet the Lord said, "This sickness is not unto death." That is, the death that Lazarus was about to experience was not only the result of the sickness, but it was also another means of bringing the glory of Christ into the open.

An Address in 1961: Part 2

"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." It is not by accident that Martha's name is put first! If we were going by what we read in Luke 10, we would have expected to read, "Now Jesus loved Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus." But Martha's name comes first. We do not forfeit the Lord's love by our selfishness. We may forfeit the sense of it in our souls, but we cannot forfeit His love. You can sin against the Lord's love, but you cannot sin it away. That is a comfort to the soul. So here the Lord's love is expressed first to Martha and then to her sister and then Lazarus. They were all the subjects of that same gracious affection which filled His heart.

Now an odd thing is noted. After He heard all about the sickness, He waited two days before He made a step to go to the relief of His friends. He abides two days still in the same place.

Verse 11: "These things said He: and after that He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." They thought he was having a restful sleep, and he would soon be well. "Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead." He was not in a coma; no, he was dead, as dead as any man ever was. "And I am glad...." Was not that a strange statement? "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad." Why? He has the end in view! and so, beloved, He looks at the circumstances in your life and in mine. We may be down very low and greatly burdened, but perhaps He is saying, "I am glad," because He has the result in view, as He did here. "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him."

Verse 17: "Then when Jesus came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off" (that is about two miles). "And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him." There is busy Martha again-as soon as she heard that He was coming, she went out to meet Him. The affection she showed is not to be discounted. If you heard that Jesus was coming, would you go to meet Him? Her heart must have been warm with affection toward Him. As soon as she hears that He is nearing the city, she wants to meet Him. I think that is in Martha's favor. "But Mary...." We had those words once before. "But Mary sat still in the house." Martha is busy again, and Mary sitting quietly in the house. Should we measure the affection of Mary and Martha by their activity? We are living in a day when the Christian world about us puts the emphasis almost entirely on the activity. How big is it, and what results can it produce? They are interested in the statistics.

When I was quite a young man, I became concerned about the path of testimony. I passed through deep exercise, because at the time I was expecting to go through the regular training and come out eventually an "ordained minister." But God spoke to my soul and gave me to see the truth. So I left the large institution and went to a little meeting in a small hall and identified myself with them. My "pastor," so-called, loved the Lord-we had had some nice fellowship-and he wrote me a letter, the burden of which was, "All I can see is that you are getting out of a great big ship

into a very little boat." He then proceeded to list statistics: their membership, the number of missionaries on the foreign field, the number of deaconesses, the number of institutions of learning, Bible seminaries -it was all statistics. Not one verse of Scripture did he quote. You know there was one thing I found in that humble little meeting to which I had transferred my allegiance. What was it? It was the appreciation of the Person of Christ-time to sit down at His feet and to listen to His Word. It was not feverish, restless activity all the time. When I went to that humble little place, I found my soul was fed on the bread convenient. I found Christ ministered to me. They came together to know what God had to say to them in His Word. They sat there and feasted upon it, and their countenances told me that they were enjoying it. I enjoyed it with them. I have never been sorry for the change.

Mary is waiting now, but Martha starts off to meet the Lord. Mary sits quietly at home. It is good to learn to sit still. Exod. 14:13 says, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD." There are times when it is a good thing to "stand still," or "sit still," as Mary did. See also 2 Chron. 20:17, where we have another example of it: "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD." Ah, there is a time to be still, to be quiet. So here Mary is sitting in the house.

"Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." v. 21. I think she was rather complaining in that remark, perhaps intimating that He might have been there sooner. "If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." That is nice. That is faith. Thank God for that. "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again." But she does not seem to take it in. "Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Any intelligent, godly Jew knew that much. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Oh, yes, when you die and go into the grave, that is not the end; you are not going to stay there, you are going to come out again. "And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Why, beloved, think of it-those of us in this room who are alive when Jesus comes back will never, never die! Is not that a marvelous announcement? But if you go out to the poor world around you and announce such a truth, they wonder what is the matter with you. "He thinks he may never die at all!" It is true; do we believe it? It is the Word of God! Is that your hope? Are you looking for it? Would you like Him to come today? We do not know from day to day how soon the Lord is coming; it is so near! "And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Do you? Thank God, if you do. Rest in it and let it form your life.

Verse 27: "She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." Martha answers Him, but not intelligently. She does give Him His place as the Messiah-the Son of God which was to come into the world. That is good orthodox doctrine. But Martha had a measure of intuition and felt in her heart here was a situation that demanded the help of Mary. She had found fault with Mary for spending her time sitting at the feet of Jesus, but now she feels that Mary knew more about these things than she did, so she hastens away and calls her sister Mary secretly. She said, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." That is what Mary wanted to hear. "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." I do not think that the Master had said that, but it was her own heart's interpretation of the heart of Christ. Here was a situation to which she personally was unequal. The need of her soul coupled with the knowledge

of Christ amounted in her judgment to a call on the part of Jesus for Mary to come. I think that is very precious, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

Verse 29: "As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly...." Do we respond to the Word of God quickly? She went quickly to where Jesus was. "Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him." Now verse 32: "Then when Mary was come where Jesus was. and saw Him"-she did not see anyone else; she saw Him- and "she fell down at His feet." There she is again-at His feet. As soon as Martha had heard that He was coming (v. 20). she went out to meet Him; but as soon as Mary got to Him. she uttered the exact words that Martha had said when she met Him: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." I am firmly convinced that though the words were identical the intonation was quite different. Perhaps it was something like this: Martha had said to Him, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But Mary said. "Lord, if THOU hadst been here, my brother had not died." Quite different! Oh, how lovely to see her at His feet, owning the glory and dignity of His Person and telling Him that if only He had been there her brother would not have died.

"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid Him? They say unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept." Now the 38th verse: "Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha [here is Martha again], the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." Poor Martha! Mary did not say anything like that. Martha loved the Lord. Martha loved her brother. But the situation is such that she does not have the acumen of faith to penetrate it. She is only looking at it from a natural point of view. "Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Now verse 43: "And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."

Now let us go on to the next chapter, chapter 12. "Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead." Here He is back at that blessed little town again, back at the same house, and here is Lazarus which had been dead. That was a miracle, a stupendous miracle. The Word of God speaks of Christ raising the dead, but only three individual cases are recorded; but I am sure there were many, if we knew of all of them. But of the three cases that are mentioned, the raising of Lazarus was the most wonderful. The other two had riot been dead so long. Here Lazarus was back home again, and Jesus was there. "There they made Him a supper." That was for Jesus, and Martha served. Martha is still the servant, but no criticism is leveled at her service here, for someone had to get the supper. Lazarus was one of them at the table with Him. "Then took Mary [here is dear Mary again] a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly." If we compare other accounts of the same incident we get the value of this ointment, which was worth about two thousand dollars. "And anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair." She is again at the feet of Jesus. It is the third time we find her there. So she is always in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing. That is the result of communion. I have thought that if Mary had been like some of our sisters, she could not have carried out part of this service for Christ very easily. She anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. In Scripture, a woman's hair is her glory. The Bible

says, If a woman have long hair it is a glory to her. So Mary took that which was her glory and wiped the feet of Jesus with it. There is nothing we possess which is too good for Him. All we have and are belongs at the feet of that blessed One. That is where Mary was. Her ointment, her hair, her heart were all at the feet of Jesus; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. We are still getting the benefit of that odor, still enjoying it. The odor of this lovely act of faith is still filling God's house. When they tried to rebuke her for it, the Lord rebuked them. He said, "Let her alone; she hath wrought a good work," and what she was doing would be told all over the world. That is true, and we are still talking about it. The faith of that dear woman is wonderful. We will see her at the feet of Jesus. The Lord said she had wrought a good work which would abide forever.

Beloved, the life you are living as a Christian-your daily life, your home life, your business life - can you take it to heaven with you? Mary took hers to heaven with her, and some day we will see her enjoying that One at His feet in the glory.

The Alabaster Box

Matt. 26:6-13

It is very needful to bear in mind, in this day of busy doing and restless activity, that God looks at everything from one standpoint, measures everything by one rule, tries everything by one touchstone; and that touchstone, that rule, that standpoint, is Christ. He values things just so far as they stand connected with the Son of His love, and no farther. Whatever is done to Christ, whatever is done for Him, is precious to God. All beside is valueless. A large amount of work may be done, and a great deal of praise drawn forth thereby, from human lips; but when God comes to examine it, He will simply look for one thing, and that is, the measure in which it stands connected with Christ. His great question will be, Has it been done in, and to, the name of Jesus? If it has, it will stand approved and be rewarded; if not, it will be rejected and burned up.

It does not matter in the least what men's thoughts may be about any particular piece of work. They may laud a person to the skies for something he is doing; they may parade his name in the public journals of the day; they may make him the subject of discourse in their drawing room circle; he may have a great name as a preacher, a teacher, a writer, a philanthropist, a moral reformer; but if he cannot connect his work with the name of Jesus-if it is not done to Him and to His glory-if it is not the fruit of the constraining love of Christ, it will all be blown away like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and sunk into eternal oblivion.

On the contrary, a man may pursue a quiet, humble, lowly path of service, unknown and unnoticed. His name may never be heard, his work may never be thought of; but what has been done, has been done in simple love to Christ. He has wrought in obscurity, with his eye on his Master. The smile of his Lord has been quite enough for him. He has never thought for one moment of seeking man's approval; he has never sought to catch his smile or shun his frown; he has pursued the even tenor of his way, simply looking to Christ, and acting for Him. His work will stand. It will be remembered and rewarded, though he did not do it for remembrance or reward, but from simple love to Jesus. It is work of the right stamp - genuine coin which will abide the fire of the day of the Lord.

The thought of all this is very solemn, yet very consolatory - solemn for those who are working in any measure under the eye of their fellows - consolatory for all those who are working beneath the eye of their Lord. It is an unspeakable mercy to be delivered from the time-serving, men-pleasing, spirit of the present day, and to be enabled to walk, ever and only, before the Lord-to have all our works begun, continued, and ended in Him.

Let us look for a few moments at the lovely and most touching illustration of this, presented to us in "the house of Simon the leper," and recorded in Matthew 26. "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat."

Now if we inquire as to this woman's object as she bent her steps to Simon's house, what was it? Was it to display the exquisite perfume of her ointment, or the material and form of her alabaster box? Was it to obtain the praise of men for her act? Was it to get a name for extraordinary devotedness to Christ, in the midst of a little group of personal friends of the Savior? No, reader, it was none of these things. How do we know? Because, the Most High God, the Creator of all things, who knows the deepest secrets of all hearts, and the true motive spring of every action - He was there in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth - He, the God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed, was present; and He weighed her action in the balances of the sanctuary, and affixed to it the seal of His approval. He sent it forth as genuine coin of the realm. He would not, He could not, have done this if there had been any alloy, any admixture of base metal, any false motive, any undercurrent. His holy and all penetrating eye went right down into the very depths of this woman's soul. He knew not only what she had done, but how and why she had done it; and He declared, "She hath wrought a good work upon Me."

In a word, then, Christ Himself was the immediate Object of this woman's soul; and it was this which gave value to her act, and sent the odor of her ointment straight up to the throne of God. Little did she know or think that untold millions would read the record of her deep-toned personal devotedness. Little did she imagine that her act would be stereotyped by the Master's hand on the very pages of eternity, and never be obliterated. She thought not of this. She sought not, nor dreamed of such marvelous publicity; had she done so, it would have robbed her act of all its charms, and deprived her sacrifice of all its fragrance.

But the blessed Lord to whom the act was done, took care that it should not be forgotten. He not only vindicated it at the moment, but handed it down into the future. This was quite enough for the heart of this woman. Having the approval of her Lord, she could well afford to bear the "indignation" even of "the disciples," and to hear her act pronounced "waste." It was sufficient for her that His heart had been refreshed. All the rest might go for what it was worth. She had never thought of securing man's praise, or of avoiding his scorn. Her one undivided Object, from first to last, was Christ. From the moment she laid her hand upon that alabaster box, until she broke it and poured its contents upon His sacred Person, it was of Himself alone she thought. She had a kind of intuitive perception of what would be suitable and grateful to her Lord in the solemn circumstances in which He was placed at the moment; and, with exquisite tact, she did that thing. She had never thought of what the ointment might be worth; or, if she had, she felt that He was worth ten thousand times as much. As to "the poor," they had their place, no doubt, and their claims also; but she felt that Jesus was more to her than all the poor in the world.

In short, the woman's heart was filled with Christ; and it was this that gave character to her action. Others might pronounce it "waste," but we may rest assured that nothing is wasted which is spent for Christ. So the woman judged, and she was right. To put honor upon Him at the very moment when all the forces of evil were rising up against Him, was the very highest act of service that man or angel could perform. He was going to be offered up. The shadows were lengthening, the gloom was deepening, the darkness thickening. The cross with all its horrors was at hand; and this woman anticipated it all, and came beforehand to anoint the body of her adorable Lord.

And mark the result. See how immediately the blessed Lord enters upon her defense, and shields her from the indignation and scorn of those who ought to have known better. "When Jesus

understood it, He said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Here was a glorious vindication, in the presence of which all human indignation, scorn, and misunderstanding must pass away like the vapor of the morning before the beams of the rising sun. "Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me." It was this that stamped the act-"a good work upon Me." This marked it off from all beside. Everything must be valued according to its connection with Christ. A man may traverse the wide wide world in order to carry out the noble objects of philanthropy; he may scatter with a princely hand the fruits of a large-hearted benevolence; he may give all his goods to feed the poor; he may go to the utmost possible length in the wide range of religiousness and morality, and yet he may never have done one single thing of which Christ can say, It is "a good work upon Me."

Reader, whoever you are, or however you are engaged, ponder this. See that you keep your eye directly upon the Master in all you do. Make Jesus the immediate object of every little act of service, no matter what. Seek so to do your every work as that He may be able to say, It is "a good work upon Me." Do not be occupied with the thoughts of men as to your path or as to your work. Do not mind their indignation or their misunderstanding, but pour your alabaster box of ointment upon the Person of your Lord. See that your every act of service is the fruit of your heart's appreciation of Him; and be assured He will appreciate your work and vindicate you before assembled myriads. Thus it was with the woman of whom we have been reading. She took her alabaster box and made her way to the house of Simon the leper, with one object in her heart, namely, Jesus and what was before Him. She was absorbed in Him. She thought of none beside, but poured her precious ointment on His head.

And note the blessed issue. Her act has come down to us, in the gospel record, coupled with His blessed name. No one can read the gospel without reading also the memorial of her personal devotedness. Empires have risen, flourished, and passed away into the region of silence and oblivion. Monuments have been erected to commemorate human genius, greatness, and philanthropy-and these monuments have crumbled into dust-but the act of this woman still lives, and shall live forever. The hand of the Master has erected a monument to her, which shall never, no never, perish. May we have grace to imitate her; and, in this day when there is so much of human effort in the way of philanthropy, may our works, whatever they are, be the fruit of our heart's appreciation of an absent, rejected, crucified Lord!

Am I Still a Child of God?

This question is constantly puzzling unestablished souls. It arises through a defective view of the infinite worth of the sacrifice of Christ, and His acceptance before God. We would offer a few thoughts upon the subject, which we trust may be helpful to any of our readers who may have this difficulty.

The unconverted sinner sins constantly. Every act, word, and deed springs from a defiled source. We are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). It is a corrupt fountain from which a stream of sin flows continually. And that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and remains flesh to the end (John 3:6). And "the carnal mind" (or the minding of the flesh) "is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. 8:7, 8.

But God in His great love to us gave His Son. Jesus the Lamb of God died on Calvary, glorified God, broke Satan's power, and bore the judgment of sin. God raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory, thereby showing His perfect satisfaction in His finished work. On the ground of that work all who believe are pardoned, justified, reconciled, saved- the children of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons" (children) "of God": etc. "Beloved, now are we the sons" (children) "of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:1, 2.

Now, as it is in the natural relationships of life, so it is in the spiritual. Once a child is born into the world, a relationship is established between the father and the child which can never be broken. And once we are the children of God, a relationship is established between God and us which is eternal. Being brought into this blessing. God looks for a walk and conduct consistent with the position of favor in which His grace has planted us. Having believed on His Son, our sins are all forgiven for His name's sake (1 John 2:12). God will remember them no more forever (Heb. 10:17). And now we should live without sinning. The Spirit of God, who dwells in the believer, is the power to enable us to live to God, and to cease from sinning. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not" (or, in no way) "fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). Having believed in Christ, not only are our sins forgiven, but Christ having died to sin, we are dead with Him, and exhorted to reckon ourselves so, and alive to God in Christ Jesus, who lives to die no more. We are delivered from the dominion of sin, called to yield ourselves to God, and to bring forth fruit to Him (Rom. 6:22, 11-13).

The truth is very simple. I am not only saved from the consequences of my sins, and of being a sinner, what I have done and what I am, but I am saved by divine grace to manifest God in the power of the Holy Ghost in all my ways -to live Christ instead of a life of sin. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" (1 John 3:6). A sinner in his sins does nothing but sin; but a child of God is saved to live without it (Phil. 1:21). We are responsible to refuse sin, root and branch, and live Christ.

We think we hear someone saying, "That is just what I desire; but there's my difficulty. Sometimes I do not watch, and then. I commit sin; my conscience is defiled, and I think I cannot be a child of God at all, especially as the remainder of the verse just quoted, 'Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not,' adds, 'whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.' " 1 John 3:6.

But this verse gives the characteristic state of a man who lives in sin. A man that sins does that which characterizes a sinner. It is a denial of Christianity, in which we have salvation from sin. In the first epistle of John we have repeatedly the contrast between the Christian and the unconverted man -the one being characterized by a life according to God, and the other by a life of sin. The whole teaching shows that there is no license in grace. We are saved by grace and for glory, but from sin now; saved from its mastery, to live without it; hence, if we sin, we are practically denying our calling, and the Word touches the conscience and pulls us up at once. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him."

But at the same time, such is God's wondrous grace that He has made a perfect provision for His children in case we do sin. We ought not to. But "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father," etc. (1 John 2:1). We do not lose our Savior or our salvation or our relationship. Grace took us up at the start, and grace will bring us through to the end. If God cast us off when, through unwatchfulness, we sin, He would never have taken us up; for then we were doing nothing else. Blessed be His name, we have an Advocate. If a Christian sins, it is as a child of God, and no longer as an enemy. And Scripture clearly teaches us that, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. But if we fail to judge ourselves, and go on carelessly, we expose ourselves to the governmental dealings of God, because having delivered us in grace, He will not condemn us with the world (1 Cor. 11:32).

The impenitent sinner, acting according to his own self will, will reap eternally the judgment of God. The impenitent child of God brings himself under the government of God now in the world. The penitent child receives a loving Father's forgiveness. It makes all the difference whether we sin as enemies or children. The relationship of child once established cannot be broken, and God defends His erring ones against the foe. God will never deliver to eternal judgment that one who believes on His Son. But just as a man, though not surprised at the conduct of a badly brought-up boy in the street, expects his own son to behave differently, so God looks for His children to conduct themselves suitably to the relationship in which His grace has placed them. How blessed, as has often been remarked, to find that though God changes His manner toward His children when they sin, He never changes His heart.

"If any man sin, we have an advocate." "If." Mark it well. We ought not to sin. Sin is not Christ. The world is characterized by the one; the children of God should be characterized by the other. But if we sin, God in His infinite grace has made a perfect provision.

Cease then, trembling one, from your foolish doubts, which dishonor God. Every time a child of God raises a question as to his relationship, he raises a question as to the infinite value of the work of Christ, and of the acceptance of His Person. He has become occupied with himself and his worthiness, of which he never had, and never will have, the smallest particle. Rest then in perfect peace and true liberty of soul on the authority of the unchanging word of Him who cannot lie, and enjoy the blessed relationship of a child, crying, "Abba, Father."

The Apostasy

We have seen that the real error that had crept in at Thessalonica was that the day of the Lord was actually present, and not that it was at hand.

The coming of the Lord for His saints, and their gathering together unto Him in the air, was a truth so well known and so firmly believed among them that the Apostle can actually use it as an argument to disprove the false view that "the day" was already come. The truth of the rapture of the saints had been revealed before; it is now used as an argument.

But now a sad and terrible disclosure is made - "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that the day shall not come except there come a falling away first." It is not merely "a falling away" as if it were some vague or abstract declension, but "the" apostasy, a definite and complete abandonment of the Christian faith.

It is an awful thing to contemplate, but Scripture leaves no room to doubt, that the final phase of the professing church will be a universal giving up of faith. The apostasy will not be restricted to Christendom; for in the end both the Jew and those who at one time professed Christianity will find themselves in open revolt against God and Christ under the leadership of the man of sin.

The condition of the so-called churches is deplorable in the extreme. In a large number of cases they are mere worldly institutions, with which it is a marvel that any really converted person could be associated. An ever increasing number of unconverted ministers occupy the pulpits of Christendom. The so-called "higher criticism" has taken possession of the schools of theology; and the young men educated amid the poisoned atmosphere of this subtle form of infidelity are pouring into the towns and villages of the land, spreading unbelief from the pulpit and the Sunday School platform. This, we believe, is rapidly bringing about the apostasy of which we read in 2 Thessalonians 2.

But it is not only in this passage that we are told of these things. No doubt 2 Thessalonians 2 describes the complete and general departure from the Christian faith which precedes the manifestation of Christ in judgment; and this state of things has not yet been fully reached, though the influences are now at work which are surely and rapidly hurrying it on.

But in 1 Tim. 4:1 we read of what is now taking place. At the close of the previous chapter the assembly has been spoken of as "the pillar and ground of the truth." The great mystery of godliness is that which the assembly of the living God is called upon to uphold before the world. Christ is the truth, and hence the solemn responsibility and holy privilege of the assembly of God is to keep and maintain intact the great truth of the Person of Christ. The so-called churches are not the Church, or assembly, of the living God. The churches of today, as we have said, are in many cases mere worldly institutions, composed largely of unconverted men who care not for Christ, and who have long since given up the belief in His deity, if ever they even outwardly held it.

The Church of the living God is composed of all the true believers on the face of the earth. In these days of ruin, instead of being all gathered together in one, as they ought to be, they are scattered and divided. But so long as the assembly of God is on earth, even in its scattered condition, it is the only witness for the truth that is anywhere to be found. Alas! that so many true Christians should give an uncertain sound as regards the Person of Christ. The great conflict of the present day is concerning this very truth. On the one hand, the assembly, God's dwelling place through the Spirit, is here to maintain and uphold it; while on the other, the approaching apostasy, energized by Satan, will completely abandon it. May every reader wake up to realize this, and take their stand for the truth of Christ's Person. The days are too serious to be fighting for mere parties, but yield not a hair's breadth when the Person of Christ is involved.

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith." These latter times are upon us in fearful earnest. This passage is not speaking of Jews or heathen, but of those who once held the Christian faith; it is not describing the early phase of the Church, but that which was to take place at the close. The Spirit of God announced prophetically, nearly two thousand years ago, the very state of things now prevalent in Christendom.

Will matters improve? Will the Lord when He comes find faith on the earth? In the twinkling of an eye He will remove the assembly of the living God, which is the pillar and support of the truth; and the whole fabric of profession will crumble to the ground, leaving nothing behind but the apostasy.

The Approbation of the Lord

It should be a joy to anyone who loves the Lord Jesus to think of having His individual peculiar approbation and love - to find that He has approved of our conduct in such and such circumstances, though none know this but ourselves who receive the approval. But, beloved, are we really content to have an approval which Christ only knows?

Let us try ourselves a little. Are we not too desirous of man's commendation of our conduct? or, at least, that he should know and give us credit for the motives which actuate it? Are we content, so long as good is done, that nobody should know anything about us - even in the assembly to be thought nothing of? that Christ alone should give us the "white stone" of His approval, and the "new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it"? (Rev. 2:17.) Are we content to seek nothing else?

O think what the terrible treachery and evil of that heart must be that is not satisfied with Christ's special favor, but seeks honor (as we do) of one another instead!

I ask you, beloved, which would be most precious to you, which you would prefer, the Lord's public owning of you as a good and faithful servant, or the private individual love of Christ resting upon you, the secret knowledge of His love and approval? He whose heart is specially attached to Christ will respond, "The latter." Both will be ours, if faithful, but we shall value this most; and there is nothing that will carry us so straight on our course as the anticipation of it.

Are We Naphtalis? Rachel's Son

God is pleased at times to teach us very sweet lessons in His Word from the characters of men, and one such as Naphtali comes home to us with such force and fullness that should make our hearts rejoice and long to be much more like what is said of him. Gen. 30:8 gives what is first said of him - his birth - "Rachel said, With great wrestlings [wrestlings of God] have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali." Naphtali means "my wrestling." We may forget things, but our names we never do; so his name would always keep fresh in his memory the wrestling through which he received it. Do we, in our souls, beloved, ever forget the "great wrestlings" of our adorable Lord on the cross - the deep travail of His soul in the day He took our place in death, that we might sing together, "Happy day! When Jesus washed my sins away"? His wrestlings are pictured in Heb. 5:7: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from [out of] death." (R.V.)

Next, Gen. 49:21 - "Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words." And Hab. 3:19 - a hind walks upon "high places." Beloved, if we have been born of God (from above), our walk should be "as our native clime - above the fading things of time," "heavenly," on high places. A high standing calls for a high state. First, then, our birth is heavenly (John 3:7); our inheritance heavenly (1 Pet. 1:3, 4); our blessings are heavenly (Eph. 1:3); and also "our conversation [or citizenship] is in heaven.; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Phil. 3:20. Thus our new birth, and His Spirit given to us, is to us a setting free, "a hind let loose" - free, not to serve self, but free to live and speak for Christ. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" (Prow. 15:23). And Naphtali "giveth goodly words," and we are exhorted to hold "forth the word of life."

Beloved, this is what is said of Naphtali - can it be said of us? are we daily walking on those high places before the world, before our brethren, in our families, and at work? And while walking on "high places," we are "let loose," free from bondage, shackles, and all of the flesh - free to serve, obey, and speak "goodly words" until our pilgrimage is over; then to be with Himself forever.

Last, Deut. 33:23: "O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the LORD." "Satisfied," not with self, but grace, or favor - how much here for our meditation! A Paul might wish a thorn in the flesh to be removed; but the Lord, who is wiser than man, answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Yes, that honored servant learned, like Naphtali, to be satisfied with favor (2 Cor. 12:9, 10).

[Beautiful it is to find, in a dark day of Israel's history (Judges 5), that Naphtali was "a people that jeopardated their lives unto the death in the high places of the field." How plainly suggestive of the devotedness of soul which becomes those whose life they owe to the "great wrestlings" of Another! "We thus judge," says the Apostle, "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 which died for them, and rose again." 2 Cor. 5:14, 15.]

We need much to appear before Him empty, walk on high places, speak goodly words, learn that His grace is sufficient for us, become satisfied with favor; then, out of all its fullness, thou wilt be filled, O my soul, with the blessing of the Lord (Psalm 16:11; 23:5).

Borrow Not a Few: Faith's Warrant

2 Kings 4:3

These words were uttered by the prophet Elisha in the ear of a distressed widow who had come to him with her tale of sorrow. And, assuredly, the words of God's prophet did but express the grace of the prophet's God. He knew well on whose behalf he was speaking - on whose grace he was counting - on whose treasury he was drawing. He did not say, Take care you do not borrow too many. He knew this was impossible. Faith never yet overdrew its account on God's bank. It has "unsearchable riches" to its credit there. Faith never yet brought an empty vessel to God that He had not oil to fill. In the case of this widow, the oil only ceased to flow when there was no longer an empty vessel to receive it. The source was exhaustless; it was faith's promise to keep the channel open. It is the business of faith to "open thy mouth wide." God's part is to "fill it." We cannot expect too largely from God.

Dear Christian reader, let the remembrance of these things have the happy effect of encouraging your heart in the life of faith. Think of these precious words, "Borrow not a few." They come to you direct from your Father's heart of tender love. He wants you to draw largely upon His infinite resources. You cannot possibly expect too much from the hand and heart of Jesus.

Is your poor heart bowed down beneath the weight of sorrow? Has the cold grasp of death seized upon the darling object of your affections? Has a serious blank been made in your heart and your home - a blank which no earthly object can fill? Then, remember, the heart of Jesus is overflowing with tender sympathy. He has felt your sorrow. He counts your sighs, and puts your tears into His bottle. If He were here, He would not chide your grief. He would sit down beside you and mingle His tears with yours. But, you say, He is not here. True, but He is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, and you can count with certainty on the sympathy of His heart. "Go," then, bereaved and sorrowing one, "borrow thee vessels,... even empty, vessels," in which to receive the abundant consolations which flow from the heart of Christ, whose encouraging word to you is, "Borrow not a few."

It may be, however, that the reader is not yet bowed down under the weight of sorrow. His heart is established in grace; and the beloved circle in which his affections have been wont to play, remains unbroken. But, then, family or commercial cares press upon his spirit. His children are not going on as he would like, or his business prospects are gloomy. If such be my reader's position, he too can learn a sweet and seasonable lesson from Elisha's words. He can go forth and borrow his empty vessels, for there is "oil" enough for him, even "the oil of gladness" for his burdened spirit. To such a one, the word is, "Cast thy burden on the Lord." He will surely sustain. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Pet. 5:7. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Phil. 4:6. Do not carry the burden for another hour. Cast it directly, cast it entirely, upon the One who is as able as He is willing, and as willing as He is able, to sustain it. In a word, "Go, borrow thee vessels,... even empty vessels," in t o which the copious streams of divine peace may flow for

your perplexed and anxious spirit. And, remember the gracious charge, "Borrow not a few."

But these lines may, perhaps, meet the eye of someone whose case has not as yet been exactly met. His exercise does not spring from a bereaved heart, or a spirit perplexed about domestic or commercial affairs. The fact is, the entire scene around has repulsed and disappointed him. And yet, it is not so much the world, for no true Christian would think of expecting anything from it. But, in the very midst of his Christian friends, all his hopes have been blighted. He had looked at those Christians from a distance, and they seemed to present the appearance of all that was lovely and attractive. Yet, alas! on coming among them, he did not realize his fondly cherished hope; and his heart, once big with expectation, is now furrowed by sore disappointment. This is no uncommon case. There is many a furrowed heart within the precincts of the Church of God. But, blessed be God, the heart's deep furrows are but so many "vessels,... empty vessels," in which to receive the streams of comfort and solace emanating from "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." Heb. 13:8. And the heart that has many furrows is ready furnished with vessels "not a few." God will surely fill those vessels; and then one comes back to be a channel of blessing in the scene which had disappointed him.

In a word, then, whatever be the state or condition of the soul - whether it be a question of sorrow, difficulty, or disappointment - the message from God is one and the same. "Go, borrow three vessels"-and, mark, it is "empty vessels"-vessels "not a few." What magnificent grace shines in the words "empty" and "not a few"! Our vessels must be empty. God will not pour into a vessel half filled with creature supplies. In every case, the vessel must be absolutely empty, for only then is it fully manifest that the "oil" has come directly from God Himself. The word "empty" shuts out the creature. The words "not a few" leave room for God to come in.

Beloved reader, these are simple truths; but, simple as they are, they stand connected with the grand essential element of the divine life in the soul. Would that they were more deeply engraven on our hearts by the eternal pen of God the Holy Ghost!

Brazen Altar, Brazen Laver, Gold Altar

Exod. 30:1-9;

My subject is three distinct parts of the tabernacle. We have the brazen altar, the brazen laver, and the golden altar, or the altar of incense.

Let us think of a stranger coming upon the congregation of the children of Israel, and seeing all their living conditions. They would be very much astonished at seeing those people living out in the desert like that without seemingly anything to support them. He sees them go out to gather something every morning - the manna. Suppose this person represents a poor sinner. If Christians were going on as they should be, an unconverted person would be (-mite surprised to see them feeding on something they know nothing about, just like the Israelites who were feeding on the manna, a type of Christ. Then there was the smitten rock where they drew water; and the rock followed them. "That Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). How lovely if 17-21; 38:1-3, 8

God's people are getting their refreshment from that pure stream-that water that flows from Calvary. Also, they have a central object. Everything is arranged around it; it is the center for the tribes.

The next thing he sees is a place set apart by linen curtains, like a fence around the tabernacle. If God's people were going on with the true Object that was intended, others would soon discover that there was an Object-the One represented in that pure white linen-the purity of the Lord Jesus. As he approached nearer he discovered an entrance way. That is made of the same material, but there is some beautiful embroidery - blue, purple, and scarlet. First, the sinner sees something of the perfection of Christ. Like the thief on the cross - "This man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:41). Then he sees something of His glory - "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom" (v. 42). The blue speaks of His heavenly kingdom. The stranger would feel that there was a holiness connected with that center, which would make him feel he was unworthy to enter that enclosure. It is like the one who said, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5).

But let us say he goes further. Within the enclosure he sees that something is going on. He gets sight of the brazen altar. The priests are engaged there offering a sacrifice. He sees the victim slain and the blood carefully caught. What does the brazen altar speak of? It speaks of the cross on which the Lord of glory died.

Perhaps you have observed the altar was made of brass. The brass speaks to us of judgment, or divine righteousness tested by judgment. So when we think of the cross which this altar represents, we think of the judgment which God meted out to that Holy Substitute that was there bearing the guilt of sinful man. The fire goes up, and the victim is burned on that altar.

Now we are going to change the thought of the stranger coming in, for one who believes on the victim on that altar. We have been "made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). Now instead of

being strangers to God, we have become priests unto God. We are "a holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5). "Hast made us unto our God kings and priests" (Rev. 5:10).

I trust everyone here has accepted that Sacrifice on Calvary. If your sins have not been judged at the cross, they will be judged for all eternity in the lake of fire. Accept the work of the cross of Calvary.

That brings us to another vessel made of brass - the brazen laver. We get the description of this in two portions of Exodus. It was between the brazen altar and the tabernacle. The first thing that met the eye was the brazen altar - a type of the cross. Then there was the brazen laver for the priests to wash in in connection with their service. It was not blood in that laver. The blood was all poured out at the bottom of the altar. All the work that our souls will ever need was accomplished at the cross. But though we have found peace with God, in the Lord Jesus Christ, what provision have we if we fail?

We get instructions for this, in type, in the brazen laver. Again, we have the thought of judgment, but what a different thought of judgment! At the altar it was the judgment of my sins, but the laver conveys the thought of the need of the judgment of myself as one who has been washed in the precious blood of Christ. I do not need the repetition of the washing of the blood of Christ. Never is that repeated, but continual cleansing is needed; and God will provide for it.

"Christ... loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25, 26). There it is. "The washing of water by the word" - the Word of God. So the fact that the laver was made of brass tells us that when we sin, there is need for self-judgment. When the Apostle writes to the Corinthians, he tells them, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." 1 Cor. 11:31. Because of unjudged failure, we bring ourselves under the chastening of God.

We fail, and the way of being restored is seen in that brazen altar - self-judgment. It is easy to judge someone else and to spare ourselves. The reason that David was a man after God's heart, was because he judged himself. God says, That is a man after My own heart - he confessed his sin with Uriah right after he sinned. If there is not self judgment, it gets us out of communion, and we drift into the world. The water in the brazen laver is a type of this precious Book I hold in my hands.

We need to read the Word daily so that we might have that cleansing that is so needful. As we read and let the Word speak to our hearts and consciences, it exercises us. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word." Psalm 119:9.

In connection with the two altars you get the exact measurements, but there is no measurement for the laver. Why? The Spirit of God would teach us there is no limit when it is a question of the restoration of the soul. Think of Peter denying his Lord on the very night of His going to the cross! - but the Lord restored him, so that in a few days he stood up and told the Jews they had denied the Holy One and the Just. There is no sin for which there is not restoration. The cleansing enabled them to go on in their priestly service.

The golden altar was inside the tabernacle. It was not to be used for a burnt sacrifice. The victim was burned on the outside, on the brazen altar. This altar was distinctly for offering sweet incense.

There was this difference, that the altar within the tabernacle was overlaid with pure gold. Outside, everything is characterized by brass, and inside by pure gold. Gold speaks of divine righteousness. The thought of judgment is not there. The load of judgment is all outside. But inside, we are in the immediate presence of God. Everything is resplendent with the glories of Christ. Is there anything to be judged in the Christ of God? Nothing whatever! And there is nothing to be judged in us when it comes to our acceptance in the presence of God, for Christ is our righteousness. Here the priests offered sweet incense. There were special instructions about the kind of incense and fire. There was to be no strange incense and no strange fire.

Where did the fire come from that burned the incense? It was taken from the brazen altar. That was where the victim had been burned.

The Lord is worthy of our highest note of praise. Suppose we just presented His beauties in manhood; would that satisfy God? No; you must bring in His death too, or it becomes strange fire.

It is precious to think of Christ in all His beauty, but let us never forget that that One lay in death for our sins. He is the One who: was there on the cross, the One upon whom God's judgment fell. Many popular hymns are full of rhythm; but they are full of strange fire if the death of Christ has no place in them. If it just shows Christ as a man who lived a perfect life, it is strange fire. Let us be sure our worship is connected with the death of Christ. God would have us realize that our highest service now and hereafter is the service of worship and praise.

"And His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. 22:3, 4). After every other service is over, the service of praise and worship of the Father and the Son will go on throughout eternity. And it is our highest service down here, too. God wants worship from our hearts. Do you want to give something back to the One who has done so much for you? You can. What a privilege to remember Him in His death for us! But there is a fitness required, for we cannot be there as true worshipers if we have a bad conscience.

The brazen laver was between the brazen altar and the golden altar. We need that special cleansing, through the washing of water by the Word, that we may come into the Lord's presence and "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15). "Continually" -God wants continual sacrifice of praise. As soon as failure comes in, the praise ceases; and when self-judgment comes in, the praise can start again. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

How we need that fitness to be in the Lord's presence! It is not fitness as to our right to go into His presence, but the state of soul that can offer that sweet incense, that can offer the loveliness and fragrance of Christ. How acceptable it is to the heart of the Father!

A Bunch of Grapes: Several Quotes

May we so trust the love of God, the faithfulness of God, that we may have courage to say, "Show me Thy way"; faith in the full delight of God to bless us, so that we may do His will, even if it be the loss of everything; our souls so intimate with God, that we may seek His way and nothing else.

If you have only got faith to walk in the path of God, you will find He has a plan and counsel through it all. If our hearts have courage to do God's will, all will turn out for blessing; we do not know how, but the secret thing is going on that faith has to get hold of. If I am walking in a straight path, the power of God is pushing me on; but if I am walking in a cross path, the power of God tumbles me over-it shows me that I am not going straight. It is a great thing to be in the path of God's will, for I have all the power of God at my disposal. If you walk in the path of God's will, God makes everything work together for your good. We cannot get a thing that is outside of the power of God, though it may be. He chastens us if crossing His path.

Only grace can accept what puts down self, and accept it unqualifiedly. The things that ruffle me show that my heart has got self in it.

We never lose if God puts us into trial, and we need never be afraid if there is faithfulness.

Are we really giving up self? The chain breaks in the link nearest our own hearts. Christ gave up everything for us; may He give us a sense of that love which makes us dear to Himself - abiding in it - making Him everything and self nothing.

When Satan is resisted, he knows flesh will not resist him; he has met Christ. Certain things have power over my heart and mind, things I cannot free myself from; Satan has his claw in my flesh; then I have to cry to the Lord.

Capital Punishment

For many years efforts have been made to abolish capital punishment as the penalty for murder. These efforts continue in our day, with a good measure of success. Last year only one American was executed, an all-time low for the nation. Other nations around the world are experiencing similar results.

The death penalty is a solemn matter, and we dread to think of convicts awaiting the day and hour designated for their trip to the gallows, the gas chamber, or the electric chair. The Christian knows, or ought to know, that there are issues of great importance involved with capital punishment as it is imposed upon murderers. God has a very vital interest in the matter, and the attitude of the child of God should accord with His. Our looking into the subject is with the desire that we might have godly wisdom and intelligence about this subject.

Under the Mosaic law a number of offenses were punishable by death. Leviticus 7 tells of seven of these, including offering to a false god, cursing parents, adultery, and various moral acts. Cursing God and breaking the Sabbath are other sins which were to be punished by death. In the book of Deuteronomy the list is extended to include idolatry and rebellion against parents, as well as other moral actions.

In present-day law, capital punishment, the taking of a man's life by governmental authority, is mostly limited to cases of murder. Treason and seditious acts against the government may be punished by death. Our present concern with this subject, however, is limited to the applicability of the death penalty to those who have been convicted of murder, those who have slain an innocent human being.

We have not to turn many pages of our Bibles before learning of murder, for in the 4th chapter of Genesis we read the account of Cain killing his brother Abel. The same chapter also records a second murder, Lamech saying, "I have slain a man to my wounding." At a later time, God would require that such a manslayer himself be put to death. Why it was not required at this early time we are not told. Yet, when speaking to Cain about his wicked act, God said, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground."

For a period of some 1,600 years, until the great flood, there was no ordered dealing of God with men; that is, it might be said that every man did that which was right in his own eyes. During that dispensation men corrupted their way, and the earth was filled with violence. The wickedness of man was great, and the thoughts of his heart were only evil. Through Noah, God called for repentance from these evil ways, but there was none. Then God brought in the flood upon that ungodly scene, and, except for eight persons, the race of man was gone.

Following the flood, God introduced a new order of things. Government of man by his fellows was established in Noah and in his sons. In Genesis 9 God charged them with this responsibility, including, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man." It is important to note that in the 4,300 years which have elapsed since God gave

that command, it has been neither amended nor recalled.

We have already considered something of the dispensation of law when a whole way of life, a way to please God, was delivered to the nation of Israel through Moses. It provided for a system of sacrifices and a priestly service. In this system there was again one act which called for special dealing. We read of it in Numb. 35:30-34: "Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.... So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it."

So strongly, we might say, did God feel about this that the case is supposed of murder by an unknown hand. Deuteronomy 21 gives the instructions which were to be followed when such a situation arose. The elders of the nearest city, by shedding the blood of a heifer, were to avenge the innocent blood. When they had done this, God said, "the blood shall be forgiven them. So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD."

In our Bibles we see then that God is very much concerned when innocent blood has been shed. His first claim is that innocent blood cries to Him for vengeance. Next is that man was created in the image of God, and third, that innocent blood pollutes, or defiles, the land. These claims are satisfied only by the shedding of the blood of the murderer. But lest any should think that God takes delight in the execution of such a judgment, let us hear His word spoken through Ezekiel: "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked."

God's claim, as we have pointed out, was established, not in the law given to Moses, but long before that. In the present dispensation the Mosaic law has been superseded by God's grace; but this in no way affects that early decree, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). This has not been superseded, amended, or canceled.

Let us remember that human government is something that God Himself has set up. In Rom. 13:1 we read, "The powers that be are ordained of God." The first six verses of this chapter make it clear that governmental authority is something that God has established, and that everyone is to be subject to those that are in authority. This is because they are really God's officers, working for the welfare of those that practice what is good. They also execute judgment on those that do evil.

Let it be noted that when a constituted governmental authority executes the sentence of death upon a convicted murderer, it is not itself committing murder. Opponents of the death penalty may cry out against such action, and call it murder; but the scriptures we have cited remove all doubt concerning this. An individual is, of course, in charge of the solemn event; but he is acting on behalf of his government and not in his own right.

This point was demonstrated following the death of the late president of the United States, John F. Kennedy. Lee Oswald was apprehended and charged with the assassination, but before he could be brought to trial he himself was killed by Jack Ruby. Based on newspaper accounts of Oswald's actions and the evidence implicating him, it might have been felt that he deserved to die. Mr. Ruby, however, in taking Oswald's life, acted of his own volition. He was not acting for the state and, as a

consequence, Ruby himself was charged with murder.

If then it is right for the state to take the life of a convicted murderer, the question may be asked whether it is appropriate for a Christian to be involved in such matters. We have no hesitancy in answering that those who know Christ as their Savior should have exercised consciences about getting involved in human government or in political matters. Heb. 11:13, 14 tells of faithful men of God who "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." In Phil. 3:20 we read, "Our conversation [or citizenship] is in heaven," and the Lord would have us walk through this scene as strangers and pilgrims on the way to our home in heaven. We can and should be thankful to God for orderly governments over us; but the conduct of government is not committed to those of whom the Lord could say, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." John 17:16.

Returning to our subject, it may be suggested that the "Sermon on the Mount" is authority for doing away with the death penalty, for in Matt. 5:38, 39 the Lord Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil...." The late William Kelly, writing on these verses in his tract entitled "The Powers That Be," said that any difficulty as to their import "is due to a failure in seizing the bearing of these scriptures, for no believer would even insinuate that one part of God's Word contradicts another.... Here the Lord instructs His disciples in their individual path, not their relation to governors, and puts their calling to walk in grace, active or passive, in contrast with the Jews, who were called to act in the righteousness of the law. It is absurd to apply such a passage to a government or a worldly tribunal. If it did so apply, it would prove that magistrates ought to caress and reward every culprit instead of punishing any."

The man of the world, unconcerned about God's claims upon the governments of earth, looks upon capital punishment according to his own light. Perhaps the majority think it is imposed solely as punishment for the evil act. To them such punishment seems very severe. We need not be concerned about man's thoughts and reasonings when we have a definite word from God Himself as to the validity of capital punishment (as we have seen in Gen. 9:6), and that man in the place of authority is "the minister of God... to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. 13:4). These verses show us "the authority of God over life, put into the hands of man and for which he was to be responsible. The exercise of this power was the manifestation of the judgment of God and recalled His holiness and authority." But for the value of this principle of rule to be recognized it is necessary that the source from which it emanated, namely, God Himself, should be acknowledged both by those who govern and those who are governed. "The value of this principle was its recalling, to the heart and the eye, the authority of that God who had established it-an authority which, thus recognized, would restrain the lusts of the flesh, ere they broke out in those acts to which the power of the sword itself was to be applied."

Satan would seek to entangle the children of God in the affairs of this life and in the affairs of government. Their part, however, is to pass quietly through this world, in it but not of it. Currently we are witnessing a severe breakdown of morality, and we see disobedience to parents and others flourishing. We see the criminal being coddled rather than being punished. This increasing laxity on the part of those in authority is, no doubt, contributing to the accelerating moral decline that is now so apparent.

The thoughtful child of God is concerned about these things, but he should leave the government of the world to those whose citizenship is in the world. The Christian's path through the world should be in separation from it. But every Christian can show the character of the Lord Jesus Christ and can stand firm as concerns the claims of a holy and righteous God and Father.

Christ Dying for the Ungodly

Rom. 5:6-11

After the Apostle has spoken of peace, patience, experience, rejoicing in hope of glory, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us, he leads us back to the simple yet comprehensive truth, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." This verse is very full.

First, we were ungodly. That is the first thing we find out; but many know they are ungodly who have not yet found out that they are without strength. How many have been going on in the ways of sin, careless and indifferent as to their eternal welfare and the salvation of their precious souls, and have been convicted of sin and seen their danger, perhaps through hearing the gospel preached, or a tract, or in conversation, or, it may be, without any human instrumentality at all; and what is often the thought of such a one? "I am determined to alter my ways, or I shall be lost; I will turn over a new leaf." The new leaf is turned, and all may go on well for a time; but soon temptations come. One resolution after another is broken, and he thinks, "It is no use my trying to be a Christian; I have tried and tried again, and the more I try to give up my sins, the more I seem to fail"; and Satan then tempts him to give all up in despair.

Have I been describing the state of anyone who may be reading these lines? Have you tried turning over a new leaf? Ah, you knew you were "ungodly," but you had yet to learn that you were "without strength." Does not that word "without strength" suit your case? Have you not tried to keep the law, tried to live without sin, tried to be a Christian? Ah, your desires were right, and we can thank God for them; but you were going the wrong way to work. You were trying to fit yourself for God's presence, and the consequence was that you found you were utterly unable to do it.

Now look at the verse, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Ungodly! is that you? Yes; without strength, unable to keep the law, to live without sin; unable to fit yourself for the presence of God. Does that suit your case? Yes. Now comes the blessed truth - it was for such Christ died-so if you have been led to see that you are "ungodly" and "without strength," here is God's word to say that it was for such as you that Christ died. Now, instead of trying to do something, you may take your stand before God as an ungodly sinner, with no pretense to righteousness, utterly without strength. You now find that what you never could do, Christ has done for you by His atoning death on the cross - "Christ died for the ungodly."

But there is more in the verse. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." What is this "due time"? For four thousand years, from the time that Adam sinned, God was proving man - seeing if any good could be found in the race of the first Adam. Man was weighed in God's balances, and found completely wanting. He was tried without law, and under law. And last, God's Son was presented to the world, to see if they would receive Him. But no; they rejected Him! And what did they do? "Crucified the Lord of glory"! What a dreadful crime! How the cross brings out what man is! This was God's due time; and then it was that Christ died for the ungodly. It is important therefore to

see that now God is not looking for improvement from man; but that the way of salvation is to take the place of a guilty sinner before Him, and own His grace in giving Christ to die for sinners.

In verse 7, the Holy Ghost goes on to show the wonders and reality of God's love in giving His Son, and the love of Christ in dying for us. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die." If there were a righteous man who was perfectly just and unblameable in his ways, yet there would be nothing in that to draw out the affections; and it would be difficult to find one who would love him enough to die for him. But possibly there might be a good man, beloved by all, and someone might possibly be found to lay down his life for him. But if such a thing really happened, what a stir and talk it would make! The life of this good man, beloved by all, is in jeopardy; can anyone be found who will risk their lives to save his? Yes; one has actually been found to do it! But what a wonder of love! This would be the greatest proof of love in man. But God's love far eclipses it, as we read in verse 8: "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that," while we were neither good nor righteous, but "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." That is why it is called His love, because it is a love peculiar to God Himself.

With us, there must always be something in another to draw out our love; in other words, there must be something to love. But God loved us when there was nothing in us to love, but our hearts at enmity to Him, and nothing but a mass of sin; for it was "while we were yet sinners" that God's love went out toward us; and the perfect expression of that love was, He gave His Son to die for us, so that now (v. 9) we are "justified by His blood."

His precious blood meets every charge that the enemy could bring against us; and now, being already justified, we shall be saved from the wrath that is about to be revealed upon a guilty world. If we believe in the love now, we shall be saved from the wrath that is coming; but if the love is rejected, wrath must be the consequence.

Verse 10. "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." The death of Christ was the way by which we were reconciled to God; but we are not yet in glory, and we have to walk through the wilderness, and we still have these bodies of humiliation; but the One who died for us now lives for us, and because He lives we shall be saved through all the difficulties and dangers of the way; and finally we shall get the body of glory like His, "according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:21). But not only so, but even now we "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [margin, reconciliation]." Having peace with God, standing in His perfect favor, and rejoicing in hope of the glory, we are at leisure to forget ourselves, and joy in God Himself - in what He is - and this draws out the worship which He delights to have from these poor hearts of ours.

Verses 1-11 of chapter 5, as we have seen, give us in a very full and blessed way the whole Christian portion; at any rate it is implied, if not brought out. Peace, standing in favor, the glory to come, the wilderness walk, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; with the sense of God's perfect love toward us, reconciliation, saved by His life, Christ's present and future service to us; and ending with worship, joying in God.

Christian Devotedness: Part 1

If there is one thing of importance now, it is Christian devotedness. I do not separate this from Christian doctrine, but found it on that. I do not surely separate it from the presence and power of the Spirit (one of the most important of these doctrines), for it is produced by it. But Christian devotedness founded on the truth, and produced by the power of the Spirit, I believe to be of the utmost importance for the saints themselves and for the testimony of God. I believe surely that doctrine is of deep importance now; clearness as to redemption, and the peace that belongs to the Christian through divine righteousness; the presence and living power of the Comforter sent down from heaven; the sure and blessed hope of Christ's coming again to receive us to Himself, that where He is we shall be also, that we shall be like Himself, seeing Him as He is, and that if we die we shall be present with Him; the knowledge that risen with Him we shall be blessed not only through but with Christ; the deep practical identification with Him through our being united with Him by the Holy Ghost. All these things, and many truths connected with them, held in the power of the Holy Ghost, separate us from the world, shelter the soul (by the spiritual possession of Christ glorified, the conscious possession of Christ) from the cavils of current infidelity, and give a living spring to the joy and hope of the whole Christian life. But the expression of the power of them in the heart will manifest itself in devotedness.

Christianity has exercised a mighty influence over the world, even where it is openly rejected, as well as where it is professedly received. Care of the poor and the supply of temporal wants have become recognized duties of society. And where the truth is not known and Christianity is corrupted, diligent devotedness to this, on the false ground of merit, is largely used to propagate that corruption. And even where infidelity prevails, the habits of feeling produced by Christianity prevail, and man becomes the object of diligent, though often of perverted, care. The testimony of the true saint surely should not be wanting where falsehood has imitated the good effects of truth. But there are higher motives than these; and it is of the true character of devotedness I would speak.

I accept as the general rule that, any special call of God apart, Christians should abide in the calling wherein they are called. This is only the place of their walk; its motives and character are behind. These are summed up in one word - Christ. He is at once the life and the Object or motive of life in us, giving thus its character to our walk. "To me," says the Apostle, "to live is Christ." There are two great parts of divine life of which devotedness is one. Both are infinite and unspeakable privileges for us, and both perfected by, manifested in, Christ. The one God Himself, the other the actings and display of His nature, as love, the divine witness of His nature which is love. This was seen in Christ. His communion with His Father was perfect, as was His desire to glorify Him. Life to Him here below was lived on account of the Father. He was the display, at all cost to Himself, of divine love to men. These could not be separated in His soul. His Father was His continual delight and object, His exercise of love and display of His Father, of the divine nature by it, constant and perfect. But this was His devotedness.

Another principle must be added to this to complete those which governed His walk: undivided obedience to His Father's will, His having that will for His constant motive. Love to the Father and obedience to Him gave form and character to His love to us. And so it is with us, only that He Himself comes in as the more immediate Object, but this in no way hindering the display of the divine nature in love. "Be ye... followers [imitators] of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." Note here the fullness of motive and character which is shown, and how high and blessed that motive and character is. We are followers and imitators of God. We walk in love as Christ loved us. It is the exercise of divine love as displayed in Christ. There is no stint in it. He gave Himself, nothing short of Himself, wholly-a principle often repeated as to Christ, His love to us, for He gave Himself for us. Yet God was the object and motive constituting its perfection: "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." It is thus we are called to walk, to imitate God, to follow Him as He displayed Himself in Christ.

If it be blessed to joy in God, who is love, it is blessed to follow Him in the love He has exercised. Yet as displayed in Christ as a man, it has God Himself for its object; and so with us. The love that descends down from God working in man rises up always toward and to God as its just and necessary object. It can have nothing lower as its spring, toward whomsoever it is exercised. All the incense of the meat offering was burnt on the altar, however sweet the savor to others. This constitutes, as I have said, its essential character and excellence; nor do its just actings in us come short of its actings in Christ. "Hereby," says John, "perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." There is no question of any cup of wrath for us. Here Christ stood, of course, alone; but all self-sacrifice displayed in Him we are called upon to display, as having His life, Himself, in us.

But I will consider this a little more methodically before I press it as an exhortation on my brethren.

As to reward, as motive, or merit, it is clear that any such thought destroys the whole truth of devotedness, because there is no love in it. It is self, looking, like "James and John," for a good place in the kingdom. Reward there is in Scripture, but it is used to encourage us in the difficulties and dangers which higher and truer motives bring us into. So Christ Himself, "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame." Yet we well know that His motive was love. So Moses: "he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible," "for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." His motive was caring for his brethren. So reward is ever used, and it is a great mercy in this way. And every man receives his reward according to his own labor.

The spring and source of all true devotedness is divine love filling and operating in our hearts; as Paul says, "the love of Christ constraineth us." Its form and character must be drawn from Christ's actings. Hence grace must first be known for oneself, for thus it is I know love. Thus it is that this love is shed abroad in the heart. We learn divine love in divine redemption. This redemption sets us too, remark, in divine righteousness before God. Thus all question of merit, of self-righteousness, is shut out, and self-seeking in our labor set aside. "Grace," we have learned, "reign[s] through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." The infinite perfect love of God toward us has wrought; has done so when we were sinners; has thought of our need; has given us eternal life in Christ when we were dead in sins - forgiveness and divine righteousness when we were guilty; given us now to enjoy divine love, to enjoy God by His Spirit dwelling in us,

and boldness in the day of judgment, because as Christ the Judge is, so are we in this world. I speak of all this now in view of the love shown in it. True, that could not have been divinely without righteousness. That is gloriously made good through Christ, and the heart is free to enjoy God's unhindered love—a love shown to men in man. For the very angels learn "the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus." This knits the heart to Christ, bringing it to God in Him, God in Him to us. We say nothing separates us from this love. The first effect is to lead the heart up, thus sanctifying it; we bless God, adore God, thus known; our delight, adoring delight, is in Jesus.

But thus near to God and in communion with Him, thus not only united, but consciously united, to Christ by the Holy Ghost, divine love flows into and through our hearts. We become animated by it through our enjoyment of it. It is really God dwelling in us, as John expresses it—His love "shed abroad in our hearts," as Paul does. It flows thus forth as it did in Christ. Its objects and motives are as in Him, save that He Himself comes in as revealing it. It is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord—not the less God, but God revealed in Christ, for there we have learned love. Thus, in all true devotedness, Christ is the first and governing Object; next, "His own which were in the world"; and then our fellow men. First their souls, then their bodies, and every need they are in. His life of good to man governs ours, but His death governs the heart. "Hereby we have known love, because He has laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16: J.N.D. Trans.). "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." We must note, too, that as redemption and divine righteousness are that through which grace reigns and love is known, all idea of merit and self-righteousness is utterly excluded, so that it is new life in us which both enjoys God and to which His love is precious—which alone is capable of delighting, as a like nature, in the blessedness that is in Him, and in which His divine love operates toward others. It is not the benevolence of nature, but the activity of divine love in the new man. Its genuineness is thus tested, because Christ has necessarily the first place with this nature; and its working is in that estimate of right and wrong which the new man alone has, and of which Christ is the measure and motive. "Not as we hoped," says Paul (it was more than he hoped), speaking of active charity, "but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."

But it is more than a new nature. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and God's love is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. And as it springs up like a well in us unto eternal life, so also living waters flow out from us by the Holy Ghost which we have received. All true devotedness, then, is the action of divine love in the redeemed, through the Holy Ghost given to them.

Christian Devotedness: Part 2

There may be a zeal which compasses sea and land, but it is in the interest of a prejudice, or the work of Satan. There may be natural benevolence clothed with a fairer name, and irritated if it be not accepted for its own sake. There may be the sense of obligation and legal activity, which, through grace, may lead farther, though it be the pressure of conscience, not the activity of love. The activity of love does not destroy the sense of obligation in the saint, but alters the whole character of his work. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." In God, love is active, but sovereign; in the saint, it is active, but a duty, because of grace. It must be free to have the divine character - to be love. Yet we owe it all, and more than an, to Him that loved us. The Spirit of God which dwells in us is a Spirit of adoption, and so of liberty with God; but it fixes the heart on God's love in a constraining way. Every right feeling in a creature must have an object; and, to be right, that object must be God, and God revealed in Christ as the Father; for in that way God possesses our souls.

Hence Paul, speaking of himself, says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." His life was a divine life. Christ lived in him, but it was a life of faith, a life living wholly by an object, and that Object Christ, and known as the Son of God loving and giving Himself for him. Here we get the practical character and motive of Christian devotedness - living to Christ. We live on account of Christ; He is the Object and reason of our life (all outside is the sphere of death); but this is the constraining power of the sense of His giving Himself for us. So, in a passage already referred to, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." They live to and for that, and nothing else. It may be a motive for various duties, but it is the motive and end of life. We are not our own, but bought with a price, and have to glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor. 6:20).

What is supposed here is not a law contending or arresting a will seeking its own pleasure, but the blessed and thankful sense of our owning ourselves to the love of the blessed Son of God, and a heart entering into that love and its Object by a life which flows from Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost. Hence it is a law of liberty. Hence too, it can only have objects of service which that life can have, and the Holy Ghost can fix the heart on; and that service will be the free service of delight. Flesh may seek to hinder, but its objects cannot be those the new man and the Holy Ghost seek. The heart ranges in the sphere in which Christ does. It loves the brethren, for Christ does; and all the saints, for He does. It seeks them all for whom Christ died, yet knowing that only grace can bring any of them; and endures "all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10). It seeks to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28); to see the saints grow up to Him who is the Head in all things, and walk worthy of the Lord. It seeks to see the Church presented as a chaste virgin to Christ. It continues in its love, though the more abundantly it loves, the less it is loved. It is ready to endure

hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

The governing motive characterizes all our walk; all is judged by it. A man of pleasure flings away money; so does an ambitious man. They judge of the value of things by pleasure and power. The covetous man thinks his path folly, judges of everything by its tendency to enrich. The Christian judges of everything by Christ. If it hinders His glory in oneself or another, it is cast away. It is judged of not as sacrifice, but cast away as a hindrance. All is dross and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. To cast away dross is no great sacrifice. How blessedly self is gone here! "Gain to me" has disappeared. What a deliverance that is! Unspeakably precious for ourselves, and morally elevating! Christ gave Himself. We have the privilege of forgetting self and living to Christ. It will be rewarded, our service in grace; but love has its own joys in serving in love. Self likes to be served. Love delights to serve.

So we see, in Christ, on earth, now; when we are in glory, He girds Himself and serves us. And shall not we, if we have the privilege, imitate, serve, give ourselves to Him who so loves us? Living to God inwardly is the only possible means of living to Him outwardly. All outward activity not moved and governed by this is fleshly and even a danger to the soul - tends to make us do without Christ, and brings in self. It is not devotedness, for devotedness is devotedness to Christ, and this must be in looking to being with Him. I dread great activity without great communion; but I believe that when the heart is with Christ, it will live to Him.

The form of devotedness, of external activity, will be governed by God's will and the competency to serve; for devotedness is a humble holy thing, doing its Master's will; but the spirit of undivided service to Christ is the true part of every Christian. We need wisdom; God gives it liberally. Christ is our true wisdom. We need power; we learn it in dependence through Him who strengthens us. Devotedness is a dependent, as it is a humble, spirit. So it was with Christ. It waits on its Lord. It has courage and confidence in the path of God's will, because it leans on divine strength in Christ. He can do all things. Hence it is patient, and does what it has to do according to His will and Word; for then He can work, and He does all that is done which is good.

There is another side of this which we have to look at. The simple fact of undivided service in love is only joy and blessing. But we are in a world where it will be opposed and rejected, and the heart will naturally save self. This Peter presented to Christ, and Christ treated it as Satan. We shall find the flesh shrink instinctively from the fact and from the effect of devotedness to Christ, because it is giving up self, and brings reproach, neglect, and opposition on us. We have to take up our cross to follow Christ - not to return to bid adieu to them that are at home in the house. It is our home still, if we may say so, and we shall at best be "John Marks"

in the work. And it will be found it is ever then "suffer me first"! If there be anything but Christ, it will be before Christ, not devotedness to Him with a single eye. But this is difficult to the heart, that there should be no self-seeking, no self-sparing, no self-indulgence! Yet none of these things are devotedness to Christ and to others, but the very opposite. Hence, if we are to live to Christ, we must hold ourselves dead, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And in point of fact, if the flesh be practically allowed, it is a continual hindrance, and reproach and opposition are then a burden, not a glory. We have with Paul to bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies (2 Cor. 4:10,

11), and so to have the sentence of death made good in ourselves. Here the Lord's help, through trials and difficulties, comes in. But we are "more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Nothing separates us from that love. But if we come to the management of our own heart, we shall find that this "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" is the great difficulty, and tests the inward state of the soul. Yet there is no liberty of service nor power but in measure of it; only, remark, we have this power in the sense of grace. It is the power of the sense we have of His dying and giving Himself for us, which by grace makes us hold ourselves as dead to all but Him. Outwardly it may be comparatively easy, and so is outward labor when self and Satan's power are not felt in opposition. But to have Christ's dying always made good against self, detected by the cross, supposes Christ to be all in the affections. The true power and quality of work is measured by it - the operation of God's Spirit by us. This is the one way of devotedness in God's sight, and God's power and the having the mind of Christ in the service we do render. This only is life. And the rest of our life, not to speak of loss or judgment, perishes when our breath goes forth. It belongs to the first Adam and to the scene he moves in, not to the Last. It is only the life which we live by Christ which remains as life.

Its motives and character are twofold: the cross, and Christ in glory. The love of Christ constrains us in the cross to give ourselves wholly up to Him who has so loved us, given Himself wholly up for us. The winning Christ and being like Him in glory gives energy, and the spring and power of hope to our path. But how constraining and mighty is the first motive, if we have really felt it! Yet how lowly! It makes us of little esteem to ourselves in the presence of such love. We see we are not our own, but bought with a price. Nor is that all. The sense of the love of Christ takes possession of the heart, and constrains us. We desire to live also to Him who gave Himself for us. The perfection of the offering and the absoluteness and perfectness with which it was offered, alike His love to us in it, has power over our souls. "Through the eternal Spirit [He] offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14). The sense that we are not our own deepens the claim in our hearts, yet takes away all merit in the devotedness. So wise and sanctifying are God's ways! How does the thought too of winning Him make all around us but dross and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Him! What is all compared with pleasing Him, possessing Him, being with Him and like Him forever! It puts the value of Christ, as the motive, on everything we do. It leads to true largeness of heart, for all dear to Him becomes precious to us, yet keeps from all looseness of nature, feelings, for we are shut up to Christ. What is not His glory is impossible. It puts sin practically out of the heart by the power of divine affections, by having the heart filled with Him. Practically, the new nature only lives with Christ for its Object.

It applies too, remark, to everything, because we have to please Christ in everything. Dress, worldly manners, worldliness in every shape disappears. They cannot be alike or agreeable to Him whom the world rejected, because He testified to it that its works were evil. The tone of the mind is unworldly, does not refer to it, save to do good to it when it can. The place of the Christian is to be the epistle of Christ. Christ thus possessing the heart has a circumscribing power. The motives, thoughts, relationships of the world, do not enter into the heart. But Christ moving all within, and all being referred in the heart to Him, it carries out its own character in Him out into the world. Kept from the evil, it is the active exercise of good that is in Him, the love of God; the heart shut up to God, but all the blessedness of God going out in the measure in which the vessel contains it.

The love is thus active. Christ has purified "unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Christ's love was active, but it is guided by the mind of Christ. It loves the brethren as Christ did; that is, has its spring in itself, not in the object; but feels all their sorrows and infirmities, yet is above them all so as to bear and forbear, and find in them the occasion of its holy exercises. It is alike tender in spirit and firm in consistency with the divine path, for such was Christ's love.

It has another character: whatever its devotedness and activity, it is obedience. There cannot be a righteous will in a creature, for righteousness in a creature is obedience. Adam fell, having a will independent of God. Christ came to do the will of Him that sent Him, and in His highest devotedness His path was that of obedience. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do." This both guides in devotedness and keeps us quiet and humble.

Our conclusion, then, is simple undivided devotedness to Christ - Christ the only Object, whatever duties that motive may lead to faithfulness in; nonconformity to the world which rejected Him; a bright heavenly hope connecting itself with Christ in glory, who will come and receive us to Himself and make us like Him, so that we should be as men that wait for their Lord; His love constraining us, in all things caring for what He cares for; Christ crucified, and Christ before us as our hope, the center round which our whole life turns.

There is another point one may do well to notice, which makes the plain difference between devotedness and natural kindness. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The Lord does not tell them to let their good works shine before men; elsewhere He says the contrary. But their profession of Christ is to be so distinct that men may know to what to attribute their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven. What is needed among Christians is, that through grace they should be Christians devoted, plainly devoted, in all their ways, devoted in heart and soul to Him who loved them and gave Himself for them.

Christian Joys

I used to think that to be a Christian was to be very miserable - to have no joys, no brightness in life. What a mistake! A Christian truly following Christ is, on the contrary, the only really happy person, because his joy depends neither on anything within him or around him, but on what the Lord is to him, and has done for him. "Rejoice in the Lord always."

I remember asking a Christian why he looked so miserable sometimes, instead of happy, as he should be. He said that he could not be happy because atmospheric influences and bodily condition were often against him.

Atmospheric influences! Bodily condition! Well, let us try and see if such reasons are enough in themselves to tip over the balance of a Christian's joy. Look at Paul and Silas in Acts 16. Anyone who knows what the prisons were in Roman days, in the southern countries, can imagine that the atmosphere of that inner cell was not very invigorating or savory. Look at them! thrust into the inner prison, their feet made fast to the stocks.

What about their bodily condition? Their backs were lacerated by the Roman scourge, and bleeding from the many stripes that had just been laid upon them. Was that a condition of body likely to produce joy? No, indeed. Atmospheric influences and bodily condition certainly did not help these two prisoners. It was night, though little difference would there be between day and night there; for no ray of sunshine could pierce as far as that inner prison.

Ah! but do they not sink under such treatment, and groan beneath such burdens? Let us see. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God."

Surely atmospheric influences and bodily conditions did their worst there, but only with the effect of forcing prayers instead of grumbles; and praises instead of groans from the prisoners. Why? Because Christ was the Object of their hearts. The joy of the Lord was their strength. The other prisoners heard them - strange sounds, indeed, to them - praises to God at midnight.

Fellow believer, we are not told to rejoice in ourselves, nor in our circumstances, but "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say. Rejoice." Phil. 4:4.

Christian Position, What Is It?

The Apostle himself, in the following passage, answers the above question most fully and distinctly. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. 5:1, 2. This is true Christian position - the full standing of the believer, as such, in the presence of God. Being justified - having peace - standing in divine favor - rejoicing in hope of glory; this is the present condition of all who "believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (chap. 4:24). Full justification is their true state, as a necessary consequence of the death and resurrection of Christ.

It was for us that Jesus died. "Who was delivered for our offenses." He came down from heaven in perfect love to us, and took our position as sinners, Himself absolutely sinless. "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12), that He might associate us with Himself in all the blessed results of His glorious work. For us also He lives again. "And was raised again for our justification." Having borne our sins and the judgment they deserved, on the cross, God raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory above the heavens. A risen Christ is the eternal witness of our complete and everlasting justification before God, we being there in Him.

We may for a time lose the sweet sense of this, in communion, but we can never lose our justification. "Whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30). Justification and glorification are inseparably joined together by God Himself. The believer is linked and bound to eternal glory, through his connection by faith with a glorified Christ. Until the Christian has learned to distinguish between communion and justification, he cannot have settled peace. There is no such thing as being justified today, and condemned tomorrow. But I may be in happy communion today, and, practically, out of it tomorrow. There are no degrees in justification, but there are degrees in communion. If I am unwatchful, or indulging in a spirit of unbelief or worldliness, I cannot possibly be enjoying happy communion with my heavenly Father. God is light and God is holy. He cannot look upon sin. He cannot be associated with evil; He must judge it. If, therefore, I am neglecting self-judgment - neglecting to judge my heart and my ways - communion must be interrupted. But the question of justification is not in the least affected by all this. It flows from another source, even the love of God; it rests on another ground, even the work of Christ. "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" Then follow four divine reasons for this state of justification and security.

"It is Christ that died."

"Yea rather, that is risen again."

"Who is even at the right hand of God."

"Who also maketh intercession for us."

On these four pillars the Christian's position securely rests. They are entirely of God. There is nothing of man's work here. "GOD... FOR US" is inscribed on each of them. They partake of the

stability of Himself. He has done all; there is "no condemnation" and "no separation."

"No condemnation!" - O my soul,

'Tis God that speaks the word;

Perfect in comeliness art Thou,

Through Christ, the risen Lord.

"No condemnation!" - precious word!

Consider it, my soul;

Thy sins were all on Jesus laid;

His stripes have made thee whole."

The first effect of this new and blessed position is "peace with God," into whose presence we have been brought by the risen Jesus. "By whom also we have access by faith." Our sins having been all blotted out by the shedding of His precious blood, we have perfect peace in His holy presence. The finished work of Christ is the only ground of peace; there is no other.

By virtue of the same blessed work, we are brought into a new relationship with God - we stand in grace - in the full enjoyment of His favor. There is nothing between us. We are near, even as Christ is near. "But now, in Christ

Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Eph. 2:13. So, even now, we can "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." All that was against us was imputed to Christ, and He made an end of sins. "Grace and glory" (Psalm 84:11) characterize our blessed and wondrous standing before God. The cross, the grave, sin, Satan, and "this present evil world," are all past. They are all behind the Christian; he is on heaven's side of the cross, on resurrection ground and in possession of resurrection life, at this present time. Nothing but the bright beams of the glory of God gilds the future. Not a single cloud dims the prospect. All is REST, PEACE, GRACE, AND GLORY.

In the mind of God the believer was delivered from his original standing as a sinner by the cross of Christ; there he came to his end as a member of the fallen and ruined family of Adam. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." (See Rom. 6:1-11.) When Christ died, the believer - all believers - died in Him, He being their representative and surety before God on the cross. They died and rose again in Him. The expression, "body of sin," means our corrupt nature, and all that was connected with it - the entire condition of the "old man." The whole thing was "destroyed" by the death of Christ, and blotted out forever from before the face of God.

But while this is true, and a most blessed truth it is, we must also remember, that the standing of the sinner is not actually changed until he believes in Jesus. The great work of expiation was indeed accomplished on the cross; but there is no change, no new life in the soul, until he believes, through the quickening operation of the Spirit, the truth of God about the Person and work of Christ. When he thus believes, his position is changed; he stands before God, vitally

connected with Him who died for us and rose again. He gets the same position as Christ Himself. "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). His standing is completely and eternally changed. "But ye are not in the flesh," says the Apostle, "but in the Spirit." That means, their standing was no longer in the flesh, or in nature, but in the Spirit. We can only know, realize, and enter into this wondrous truth, in the power of the Spirit of God. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are IN CHRIST JESUS." Rom. 8:1. To be "in Christ Jesus" is to be where He is, and as He is. There can be no condemnation to Christ; therefore, there can be no condemnation to the Christian. He is the measure of our nearness to God, the definition of our blessedness in His presence, and of our relationship to Him.

From the time that the sinner believes on Christ, he has this truly blessed place with Him. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Eph. 2:4-6. Such is the fellowship which God Himself has given to us in His beloved Son, in His "rich" mercy and "great love." Be His blessed name forever adored! In His estimation we are sitting together in Him, in the heavenlies. We have fellowship with Christ as the risen Man in glory. We have fellowship with Him, in His life, in resurrection, in His righteousness before God, in His full acceptance in His sight, in His complete and final victory over every enemy, and in His blessed hope of coming glory.

The effect of the knowledge of this truth is a rich blessing to the soul. It gives holy, happy liberty before God on many important points. If I know that my divine place is in the immediate presence of God, that my home is there and nowhere else, I must know that my sins are all put away. Nothing is more certain than that I cannot be there with my sins. If I am there, my sins are all gone. And we have already seen, that the believer is there as the fruit of the work of Christ.

The God of love and power entered the dark domain of death, where Jesus lay for our sins, and quickened His beloved Son and His beloved people together, and raised them up together, and made them sit together in heavenly places. God has done it all, in the greatness of His love, on the ground of the perfection of the work of Christ for us; He says He has done it, and that is enough.

We will only add, further, that nothing is more fitted to "deliver us from this present evil world," than the knowledge of our connection with a heavenly Christ. The occupation of the soul with Him, will surely lead to heavenly mindedness and separation in heart from the world. Paul had seen Christ in glory, and, no doubt, was fully occupied in heart with Him when he said, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:13, 14.

May we thus be kept, dear reader, with our hearts dead to the world and truly alive to the claims of our heavenly Lord Jesus. "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Col. 3:1-4.

All that we were - our sins, our guilt,

Our death, was all our own;

All that we are we owe to Thee,
Thou God of grace alone.
Thy mercy found us in our sins,
And gave us to believe;
Then, in believing, peace we found;
And in Thy Christ we live.
All that we are, as saints, on earth,
All that we hope to be,
When Jesus comes and glory dawns-
We owe it all to Thee.

Counsels to Young Christians

Cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. Depend on Him. There is power in Christ; there is sufficiency in Christ for all He would have you do or be. Some are allowed a long season of joy on first believing. But God knows our hearts, and how soon we begin to depend on our joy, and not on Christ. He is our Object, not the joy.

Sin no longer remains on you, but the flesh is in you to the end; the old stock will put forth its buds, which must be snipped off as they appear. No fruit can come of it. It is the new nature that bears fruit unto God. But though the flesh is in you, do not be thinking of this, but think of Christ. As you grow in the knowledge of Christ, a joy comes, deeper than the first joy.

I have known Christ more or less between thirty and forty years, and I can truly say I have ten thousand times more joy in Him now than I had at first. It is a deeper, calmer joy. The water rushing down a hill is beautiful to look at, and makes most noise; but you will find the water in the plain deeper, calmer, more fit for general use.

Cleave to Christ with purpose of heart. A distracted heart is the bane of Christians. When we have something that is not Christ, we are away from the source of strength. When my soul is filled with Christ, I have no heart or eye for the trash of this world. If Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith, it will not be a question with you, "What harm is there in this or that?" But rather, "Am I doing this for Christ?" "Can Christ go along with me in this?"

Do not let the world come in and distract your thoughts. I speak especially to young Christians. Those who are older have had more experience in it, and know more what it is worth; but it all lies shining before you, endeavoring to attract you. Its smiles are deceitful; still it smiles. It makes promises which it cannot keep; still it makes them. Your hearts are too big for the world; it cannot fill them. They are too little for Christ; He fills heaven; He will fill you to overflowing.

Cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. He knows how treacherous the heart is, and how soon it will put anything in His place. You will have indeed to learn what is in your own heart. Abide with God, and you will learn it with Him, and with His grace. If you do not, you will have with bitter sorrow to learn it with the devil, through his successful temptation.

But God is faithful. If you have been getting away from Him, and other things have come in and formed a crust, as it were, over your hearts, you will not at once get back the joy. God will have you deal with this crust, and get rid of it. Remember, Christ bought you with His own blood, that you should be His, not the world's.

Do not let Satan get between you and God's grace. However careless you may have been, however far you may have gotten away from Him, count on His love. It is His joy to see you back again. Look at the sin with horror, but never wrong Him by distrusting His love. Mistrust not His work, mistrust not His love. He has loved you, and will love you to the end.

Talk much with Jesus. N ever be content without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a dear friend. Be not satisfied with anything short of close intercourse of soul with Him who has loved you and washed you from your sins in His own blood.

Current Events: Four Anniversaries

Each passing year brings a full quota of anniversaries of every sort, and 1967 is no different. However, four special occasions being celebrated or, at least, noted this year, are of interest to Christians. The four events are:

The 450th anniversary of the Reformation;

The 100th anniversary of the Dominion of Canada;

The 50th anniversary of communism;

The 10th anniversary of the European Common Market.

Of these four, the first two have had a distinct bearing upon the lives of many of our readers. The last two have a bearing on what is yet to unfold to the world when God's prophetic clock again begins to run. God has been working, and is working, behind the scenes in all the events of time. They are working out His will, and in the end they will accomplish His purposes for His own glory and for His people's good.

While the Reformation actually spanned a number of years, its beginning is dated from October 31, 1517. On that day, 450 years ago, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of his church in Germany. By this means he stated his protest against many of the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. His main grievance was with the sale of indulgences, in which, in exchange for money or some meritorious work, the church would, they said, release a sinner from the punishment he rightly deserved. Earlier, Luther had been greatly exercised about his own sinfulness, and especially with the awful contrast with God's majesty. He sensed that the Roman Church could not really forgive his sins. Then, while searching his Bible, Luther discovered for himself the truth of Romans 1:17. "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

Another writer has said of the Reformation: "Comparatively few in our peaceful times have any idea of the real nature and the comprehensive grasp of popery. During the long period of the middle ages it was fully developed.... The clergy, including the monks and friars, were a distinct class, and stood entirely apart from the rest of mankind. A broad, deep, impassable line separated the two communities- the clergy and the laity. The lives, the laws, the property, the rights, and the social duties of the one were not only different from those of the other, but often antagonistic....

"The confessional laid open the whole heart of everyone, from the highest to the lowest, before the eye of the priesthood. No act was beyond their cognizance, hardly any thought or intention was secret.... Those who openly doubted the power of the clergy... were heretics, outcasts, proscribed, only fit fuel for the flames.""

Such was the state of things when Martin Luther challenged the Roman Church. "The pope's indulgence," said Luther, "cannot take away sins; God alone remits sins, and He pardons those

who are truly penitent without help from man's absolutions.... Every true Christian participates in all the blessings of Christ, by God's grace, and without a letter of indulgence."

In a very short time, Luther's theses were read throughout all of Germany. They spread over the whole of Christendom "as if the angels of heaven had been the messengers to exhibit them to universal gaze."

"The mighty movement... knew no limit, no end. The awakening in the German empire, the revival of the gospel, and the rising interests of the Reformation, had deeply affected the general state of Europe. Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, Spain, France, and the British Isles were drawn into the stream of the great religious revolution. It soon ceased to be a merely local, or even a national, question; it became the great overwhelming topic of the time."

Following on that event of 450 years ago, the gospel went forth as perhaps never before. Soon thereafter the Bible was made available to all who would have it. Martin Luther was God's chosen instrument for the special work of the Reformation, and since then Christians everywhere have been the beneficiaries of this movement. Of him, Mr. Darby said, "I see in Luther an energy of faith for which millions of souls ought to be thankful to God, and I can certainly say I am."

The Canadian centennial turns our thoughts back to the early history of that land. Indeed, Columbus' discovery of North America, and the Reformation which we have just been considering, were separated by only 25 years. And only a century after the Reformation, the colonization of North America began with the arrival of the Pilgrims. It is said that when the Reformation divided Europe into warring camps, thousands were stirred to journey to the New World seeking homes which would be free from religious persecution.

Both the French and English claimed sections of Canada, and both established governments where they could. But, as in Europe where these two powers had often been at war, in North America too there was conflict between them. The Seven-Years-War, so named because these two nations fought each other from 1756 to 1763, ended in the triumph of Great Britain; French Canada became her colony.

Soon thereafter, the rudimentary United States fought and won independence, but not until later did Canada become a sovereign nation. The British North American Act accomplished this, providing Canada with its own constitution; and on July 1, 1867 Canada became an independent nation. This year she celebrates her 100th anniversary.

The letters of J. N. Darby afford an interesting insight into conditions in Canada during the years immediately preceding its nationhood. Mr. Darby made several trips across the Atlantic, the first being in the summer of 1862. During the subsequent winter he wrote: "We have had 52 degrees below freezing point, fine healthy weather, but it stopped my preaching at Acton.... D.V., Monday we start for the bush, 40 miles off, where there are a good many brethren, godly, intelligent men; some six or seven years ago a place of bears and wolves."

As to the work of the Lord in those early days, Mr. Darby said, "Blessing has gone on here.... Our conference at Toronto was a very happy one indeed." At another time he wrote, "We have had our meeting at Guelph.... We had great liberty and happiness together, and it showed the progress of truth, and will, with the Lord's blessing, be the means of spreading it.... We had a good many

Indians and there is decided progress both in numbers and in spiritual apprehension."

This was Canada 100 years ago as seen through the eyes of J. N. Darby. We who live in lands such as Canada is today, ought to give thanks to God for the many mercies He has granted us. But while we enjoy liberty and sound government, may it be said of us: "These... confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.... They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." Heb. 11:13-16.

Russian communism reached its 50th anniversary this year, a revolution in 1917 having led to the end of the old Russian Empire.

Nicolai Lenin was the leader of the new Russia until his death in 1924. Joseph Stalin succeeded him in the premier's office, being the responsible head of government for almost 30 years. Since Stalin's death several men have held the office.

We might well wonder why God has allowed Russia to continue as it has. Of Stalin it has been said that he was "a dictator with the blood of some 9,000,000 kulaks and political enemies on his hands." For a long time, too, Russia's leaders have tried to cast out the thought of God, to exile Him from their borders. But Russia has a place in prophecy; and for this reason, if for no other, we can suppose she has been allowed to stand.

In the prophetic scriptures we are told of three wicked men who are to play important parts in the history of the world, before the Lord Jesus reigns as Son of man over the earth. The three men are: 1) the antichrist; 2) the beast, or chief of the revived Roman Empire; and 3) the king of the north.

It is with the last of these three men that we are here concerned, for Russia will very probably be his supporter when, during the great tribulation, the king of the north will descend upon the land of Israel for war. There he will find that the Lord Himself is his opponent. In the end, Christ will be there in His character of the Prince of princes, against whom this king of the north will "stand up," but only to be "broken without hand," for "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." See Dan. 8:24, 25 and 11:45. The beast and the antichrist, or false prophet, will also be destroyed by the Lord when He comes from heaven (Rev. 19:19, 20).

From chapters 36 to 40 of Ezekiel we learn that about this time Israel will be fully and finally restored and brought into blessing in their own land, their time of great tribulation being over. Still remaining to be dealt with will be •the vast and mighty empire of Russia, that was probably the power behind the king of the north. In Ezekiel 38 and 39 we are told in considerable detail of the final and terrible overthrow of this Russian Empire. So vast is the host that will be destroyed that, Scripture tells us, their weapons of war will suffice to Israel for firewood for seven years, and the burial of the dead will require seven months (Eze. 39:9-12).

When all is over, then the Lord says: "I will set My glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see My judgment that I have executed, and My hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward." Eze. 39:21, 22.

Fearful times lie ahead for this poor world, and God has revealed something of them in His Word. Wonderful it is to know that the Church of God will be removed before the earth becomes the scene of desolating judgments. In that day, Russia and other nations which defy God will be completely subdued; and the Lord Jesus will reign, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16).

The fourth event specially noted in 1967 is the 10th anniversary of the European Economic Community (called EEC) or, as it is usually known, the European Common Market. The significance of EEC lies in its being the probable forerunner of the revived Roman Empire. For this reason it is of interest to Christians.

The European Economic Community came into being when six nations signed the Treaty of Rome on March 25, 1957. The signatory powers - Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands - were all formerly within the domain of the Roman Empire. This empire was in existence when the Lord Jesus was on earth, and it went on until the year 476. From Scripture we learn that this empire is to be revived again, probably about the time the Lord takes His own people home to glory, or very shortly thereafter.

The purpose of the recent treaty included a customs union, a free flow of labor between the nations involved, uniformity of laws, free flow of capital, and, eventually, political union. The initial success of the association was astounding. After only four years it had become the free world's largest trading unit, and was also the world's largest buyer-importer of raw materials.

After ten years, the leaders of EEC can look upon some other tremendous gains. The combined gross national product of the six nations has grown by 50 per cent, while trade between them has more than tripled. In its major political goal, however - a United States of Europe - the plan has thus far not been successful.

But God's Word cannot fail, and the Roman Empire will again come into existence. Rev. 17:8 (J.N.D. Trans.) teaches us this, for it is "the beast, that... was, and is not, and shall be present." Satan will use this vast empire during the great tribulation in open antagonism against God and all His interests upon this earth.

It should be noted that the Roman Empire is a political system, whereas the Church of Rome is a religious system, although with political aspirations as of old. We are concerned here with the political system, the beast and the ten kings of Revelation 17. These ten kings will give their power to the beast, and "these shall make war with the Lamb." This, the last great war in which the Western powers will be involved, will take place around Jerusalem near the end of the tribulation. It will result in the final and complete overthrow of the Western confederation.

Paul Wilson, beloved editor of Christian Truth for many years, now with the Lord, said this about the revived Roman Empire: "God's Word tells of it... We need not be surprised then to see it taking shape today. And while we see it, let us be encouraged to look up. The coming of the Lord for His own must precede the events foretold in Daniel and Revelation. If everything is ready for this great political union, then our home call may come at any moment. 'The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' Let us lift our eyes toward the dark sky and watch for the appearing of the bright Morning Star."

Four events in the history of the world are recalled to us by their anniversaries this year. The first two events remind us of rich mercies bestowed upon Christians, and the last two carry with them the reminder that the Lord Jesus is coming soon to claim His bride. As we consider these events, we can appropriate to ourselves the Lord's own words in Luke 21:28: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Let us be reminded too of the Apostle Peter's admonition: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless." 2 Pet. 3:14.

Dayspring From on High

Genesis 1; Luke 1:78, 79

"God said" (in the beginning), "Let there be light: and there was light," when "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Thus were the first rays of light from above let in upon a scene of ruin and disorder and darkness, well suited, indeed, to picture to us what the condition of our souls is as God's eye surveys it, when He is about to bring us "out of darkness into His marvelous light."

But this first light was not to cheer and gladden animated nature, nor to set in order the existing chaos; for of the former there was none in being, and as to the latter it must first be seen as it is - "made manifest" - ere the same mighty word that discovered it, placed all in suited order for Him who is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

And thus, beloved reader, is it as to ourselves, and the ways of that same God with us, and the action of that same word-then in His creative power, and now in the "riches of His grace"! His word comes to convict and test -ere it delivers-to make all "naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do," ere giving the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The entrance of it gives light, 'tis true, but it is not joy, but misery-not freedom, but our bondage realized-not peace, but anxious fears-not the faith that gives us to "see Jesus," but to judge ourselves-not looking off unto Him, but looking within-not joy and gladness, because sorrow and sighing have fled away (Isa. 51:11), but "Woe is me! for I am undone" (Isa. 6:5), "Depart from me... O Lord" (Luke 5:8), not God's appreciation of the "sweet savor" of the cross of Jesus (burnt offering), but His holy judgment of our sins (sin offering), that first we learn.

As the patient's need is carefully learned by the skillful physician, so ours must be, ere the healing balm be known. Jesus comes to us where we are, ere He leads us to where He is. He has compassion on us, and teaches us to have compassion on ourselves, ere He binds up our wounds (Luke 10:34) with His precious oil and wine. He must break our hearts about the sins that once bore Him down, ere His hand can bind those broken hearts. Willingly would He spare us, but it cannot be. If chaos is our condition, then it must be realized ere it can be met. If He has come as "light," thus lighting every man, and that "whosoever believeth... should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46), then first it must be told us what the nature of that darkness is; and then we behold "His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). This brings us to the notice of other lights connected with creation and giving the order of His blessed ways with us as with it. "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night;... to give light upon the earth... and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good."

Thus beautifully and suggestively is this second and richer giving of the light in God's creation described to us. And surely the lessons (so plainly parallel of what is there given, as to things of earth and time) are near at hand for us, as to things of heaven and eternity. Again, let us notice

that His word, in this case as before, introduces these glories of "the heavens," setting them in their place as the blessers and rulers of the scene below. Even so it is with us, as first we learn " 'mid clouds and darkness," by the shining in of the testimony of God, that we are sinners, lost and ruined in His sight, and afterward find the rays of His glory as the Savior-God shining in in grace upon us, bringing peace and blessing. And then, further, we learn that His glory shining is to rule and separate, as well as cheer and gladden. Thus richly does it unfold for us to learn it-the light that searches and discerns, exposes and makes manifest, first entering, where more will follow to set right all that is proven to be not so. This answers to repentance and the judgment of ourselves in humiliation and self-abhorrence, which is the first action of His Word upon us-the working of His Spirit within us. Then the setting above the greater lights to shine down upon the scene where darkness once had reigned, this giving the exaltation before our hearts of the One whom God has set at the right hand of His Majesty in the heavens, meets fully all the stirrings of our consciences, and satisfies all the cravings of our hearts, claiming us thus to live for Him, and separating us to Him.

Manifestly thus lessons of our need and divine blessing are before us-ourselves with "no good thing" dwelling in us, Himself as "altogether lovely," "chiefest among ten thousand."

The Disappointments of Life: Found in Darby's Bible

"This thing is from Me" 1 Kings 12:24)

The disappointments of life are in reality only the decrees of love. I have a message for you today, My child. I will whisper it softly in your ear, in order that the storm clouds which appear may be gilded with glory, and that the thorns on which you may have to walk may be blunted. The message is short-a tiny sentence - but allow it to sink into the depths of your heart, and be to you as a cushion on which to rest your weary head: "This thing is from Me."

Have you never thought that all which concerns you, concerns Me also? "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." Zech. 2:8. You have been precious in My eyes; that is why I take a special interest in your upbringing. When temptation assails you, and the "enemy comes in like a flood," I would wish you to know that "This thing is from Me." I am the God of circumstances.

You have not been placed where you are by chance, but because it is the place I have chosen for you. Did you not ask to become humble? Behold, I have placed you in the very place where this lesson is to be learned. It is by your surroundings and your companions that the working of My will is to come about.

Have you money difficulties? Is it hard to keep within your income? "This thing is from Me." For I am He that possesses all things. I wish you to draw everything from Me, and that you depend entirely upon Me. My riches are illimitable (Phil. 4:19). Put My promise to the proof, so that it may not be said of you, "Yet in this thing ye did not believe the LORD your God." Deut. 1:32.

Are you passing through a night of affliction? "This thing is from Me." I am the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isa. 53:3). I have left you without human support, that in turning to Me you might obtain eternal consolation (2 Thess. 2:16, 17).

Has some friend disappointed you? --one to whom you had opened your heart? "This thing is from Me." I have allowed this disappointment that you might learn that the best friend is Jesus. He preserves us' from falling, fights for us in our combats; yes, the best friend is Jesus. I long to be your confidant.

Has someone said false things of you? Leave that, and come closer to Me, under My wings, away from the place of wordy dispute; for I will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon day (Psalm 37:6). Have your plans been all upset? Are you crushed and weary? "This thing is from Me." Have you made plans and then coming, asked Me to bless them? I wish to make your plans for you. I will take the responsibility, for it is too heavy for you, and you could not perform it alone (Exod. 18:18). You are but an instrument and not an agent.

Have you desired fervently to do some great work for Me? Instead of that you have been laid aside on a bed of sickness and suffering. "This thing is from Me." I was unable to attract your attention while you were so active. I wish to teach you some of My deep lessons. It is only those who have learned to wait patiently who can serve Me. My greatest workers are sometimes those who are

laid aside from active service in order that they may learn to wield the weapon of prayer.

Are you suddenly called to occupy a difficult position full of responsibilities? Go forward, counting on me. I am giving you the position full of difficulties for the reason that Jehovah your God will bless you in all your works, and in all the business of your hands (Deut. 15:18). This day I place in your hand a pot of holy oil. Draw from it freely, My child, that all the circumstances arising along the pathway, each word that gives you pain, each interruption trying to your patience, each manifestation of your feebleness, may be anointed with this oil. Remember that interruptions are divine instructions. The sting will go in the measure in which you see Me in all things. Therefore set your heart to all the words that I testify among you this day. For it is your life. (Deut. 32:46, 47.)

The Everlasting Arms

Deut. 33:27

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." So spoke Moses, "the man of God," in the blessing wherewith he blessed the children of Israel before his death (Deut. 33:1). There is little need to affirm that the blessing here pronounced - in its truest significance - belongs to the children of God in this dispensation; for "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Indeed, there is scarcely a scripture in the Old Testament which has been more abundantly used for consolation. Feeble believers - weary ones on beds of sickness - led, we doubt not, by the Spirit of God, have appropriated it in all ages; and they have been both sustained and comforted by the thought - the sweet assurance - that "the everlasting arms" are underneath them, folding them, as it were, in a divine embrace.

What, then, are these "everlasting arms"? Have we any indications in the Word of what is signified by the term?

For though we may be able to feel what is meant, it will enhance our sense of the blessedness of the assurance, if we are able to arrive at the thought the term was intended to convey. Let us turn then, first to Exodus 28. We read there, in the description of the garments of the high priest, "and thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD upon his two shoulders for a memorial." vv. 9-12. Further on we have, after the direction as to the precious stones composing the breastplate, "And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes.... And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually." vv. 21, 29.

We thus see that Aaron, as the high priest, bore the names of the children of Israel when he went in on their behalf before the Lord, on his shoulders and on his heart. Now, the meaning of a shoulder in Scripture is strength, as may be seen from the following: "The government shall be upon His shoulder" (Isa. 9:6); and again, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder" (Isa. 22:22). The heart, in like manner, always signifies love, as there is no need to show. What we have then is, that the high priest upheld the children of Israel before the Lord perpetually with strength and love. An allusion to this may be found in the Song of Solomon. "Set me," cries the bride, "as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most

vehement flame." Chap. 8: 6. Here, it will be observed, we have the same combination of strength and love.

Applying this now to the term, "The everlasting arms," there can be little doubt that we have the same thought - the union of strength and love in support of the children of God. That is, the everlasting arms are everlasting strength and everlasting love, wherewith God upholds, sustains, comforts His own, and folds them to His own heart in perfect security and repose; or, if we prefer to carry on the thought of priesthood, it is the everlasting strength and the everlasting love wherewith Christ, as our Priest, upholds us before God. Both aspects are true, and may therefore be blended in our meditations; and surely we may find in either an abundant source of instruction and consolation. We may briefly indicate the channels, in either direction, in which our meditations will necessarily flow.

If, then, we take "the everlasting arms," as explained, in connection with God - and this is in harmony with the context, as the preceding clause is, "The eternal God is thy refuge" - we may discover striking correspondencies in New Testament Scriptures. An example or two may be given. "No man [none] is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:29). Here the thought is presented to us of strength - the almighty power, indeed, with which we are held in the hand of God, so that none is able to pluck us away. Speaking before the Father - indeed bearing us on His heart before the Father - the Lord prays "that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me." John 17:22, 23. Here we have revealed the everlasting love of God - or rather of the Father - calling attention now only to this one feature. Both things are seen in that familiar scripture in Romans 8: "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." vv. 38, 39. We are thus entitled to the consolation that we are secured in the embrace of everlasting strength and everlasting love. And surely when we are borne down by weakness, or tossing to and fro in pain on a bed of sickness, or lying wearily through long and wakeful nights, it will calm our hearts, hush every rebellious thought, yea, shed a sweet and soothing peace upon our troubled spirits, to remember that these everlasting arms are underneath us. Our hearts - poor, cold, and sinful as we know them to be, yet folded to His heart - will be quickened to a larger response, as we feel there the beatings of that heart of divine love, and hear the blissful assurance that nothing - no power in earth, or under the earth - can ever separate us from this divine and everlasting love! "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

If we look, moreover, at Christ as our priest, we shall see the union of the same two things. Indeed, it springs from the character of His Person. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," etc. (Heb. 4:14). He is Jesus - the Man - and He is the Son of God. As Man He was tempted in all points like as we are, apart from sin; and therefore He is One who can sympathize with the feeling of our infirmities - One whose heart can enter into and feel with us in all our needs, and present us accordingly before God. But He is also the Son of God - He whom God "hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds" (Heb. 1:2). Well then might it comfort us to remember that He who upholds "all things by the word of His power" is the One who is seated - having by Himself purged our sins - as our High

Priest, on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and that it is He who bears us up there on His shoulders before God. Again and again are we reminded of these two characteristics - His heart and His shoulder (His strength) - throughout this epistle.

Take one more example.

"But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost [all the way through] that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. 7:24, 25. He bears us on His heart in intercession, and He is able to save us from beginning to end.

Thus it is clear also, that the heart and the shoulder of Christ sustain His people; and these are exactly the two things we need as pilgrims passing through the desert. It is true that our place is in the heavenlies; but it is also true that we are in the wilderness; and when we are made to feel that we are there, there is no consolation like that which the heart and shoulder of Christ can give us. His heart sheds brightness upon the gloomiest scene, and His shoulder will sustain us in the extremity of weakness in the presence of the mightiest foes. Thus He also folds us to His heart with the everlasting arms of strength and love. What courage, what endurance will the assurance give us! And how blessed to give ourselves up to the sweet sense of security and of endearment which the embrace of Christ thus affords!

May the Lord give us to know ever more fully, and more practically, what it is to have underneath us the everlasting arms.

Faith

It is characteristic of faith to reckon on God, not simply in spite of difficulty, but in 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 render the thing 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 THE ENERGY OF THE SPIRIT. Christians do much, and effect little-why?

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him." Heb. 11:6.

The Faithful Jewess

Over 30 years ago, a young Jewess was brought to the Lord and truly converted. Her husband had died a few years previously, leaving her with five little children to bring up and care for. In order to do so, she obtained a position in one of the departments of a large store; and it was during this time that her conversion took place.

She lost no time in letting it be known among her fellow workers, with the result that a great stir was caused, accompanied by much opposition. But the young Jewess was true to what she had learned of the Lord, and did not cease by word of mouth, as well as by her walk and ways, to testify of Christ.

It was not long before it reached the ears of her employer, and she was summoned into his presence.

"What is the meaning of all this that I hear about you and your Christ?" he asked. "You have been the cause of a great disturbance and stir among my assistants. This has got to stop. I will give you till the end of the month; and then, if you still persist in going on in this way, you must either give up your Christ, or give up work and The Jewess was somewhat taken aback by the turn affairs had taken, and was silent for a minute or two.

"That is going to be rather hard, Sir," she said, "for, as you are aware, I am a widow with five young children to care for. But, if it comes to that, Sir, I'll choose to give up my work, and starve, rather than give up my Christ."

At the end of the month, she was again summoned into her employer's rooms.

"Well," he said, "I hear you are still speaking of your Christ. You remember what I told you?"

"Yes, Sir, I do," was the Jewess' reply; "but my decision is unaltered."

Then the manager said, "We have decided to retain you in the store, and you are to be the manager of your department."

Her gratitude to God may better be imagined than described; and it is worthy of note that she continued to witness for the Lord as faithfully as before.

"Them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 2:30).

"If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor." John 12:26.

Would that, among the people of God today, there would be more of that spirit of wholehearted devotion to Christ, which characterized the Jewess who was prepared to sacrifice everything that her heart would naturally count dear to her, for His sake!

First Love Abandoned

The silence of Scripture often discloses sadness, as in the case of Ephesus. But the feelings of the Spirit of God cannot be restrained. In faithfulness, He lays His finger on the sore spot. In remonstrance, all the more powerful because of its restraint and brevity, He says, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Rev. 2:4.

The touching reproof and appeal of the Lord speaks to our hearts that He values our love, and it is in the healthful exercise of this bond that we are kept. May this have a special voice to each one of us at this present time.

The Forsaken One

There is an utterance in Psalm 22 of deep and marvelous import - a sentence to which there is no parallel in the volume of God. It is this: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Never, we may safely say, was there such a question asked before; never has there such a one been asked since, nor shall its like ever be asked again. It stands alone in the annals of eternity.

Reader, let us dwell upon it for a few moments. Who was it that asked this wondrous question? It was the eternal Son of God, the One who had lain in the bosom of the Father before the foundation of the world, the Object of the Father's infinite delight. Moreover, He was Himself God over all, blessed forever, the Creator of all things, the almighty Sustainer of the wide universe. Finally, He was a Man - a spotless, holy, perfect Man - One who had never sinned, nor could sin, because He knew no sin. And yet, withal, a Man, a real Man, born of a woman, like unto us in every possible respect, with one solitary exception - sin. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth " 1 Pet. 2:22. He did ever those things that pleased God. From the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary His whole life was in perfect accordance with the will of God. He lived but to glorify God. His every thought, His every word, His every look, His every movement, emitted an odor of ineffable sweetness which ascended to the throne and refreshed the heart of God. Again and again the heavens were opened upon this blessed One; and the voice of the eternal Father bore witness to Him in such accents as these: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

This then was the One who asked the question. He it was who said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And is it really true that that One was forsaken of God? Did God in very deed forsake His only begotten well-beloved Son? Did He actually hide His face from the only sinless, spotless, perfect Man that ever lived in this sinful world? Did He close His ear to the cry of One who had lived but to do His will and glorify His name? Yes; marvelous to declare, God did this. God, who withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous, whose ear is ever open to the cry of the needy, whose hand is ever stretched forth for the defense of the weak and the helpless; He, even He, turned away His face from His own beloved Son, and refused for the moment to hear His cry.

Here we have a profound mystery on which we cannot dwell too deeply. It contains in it the very marrow and substance of the gospel, the grand basis-truth of Christianity. The more we ponder the glories of the One who asked the question - who He was, what He was, what He was in Himself, and what He was to God - the more we see the marvelous depths of the question. And further, the more we consider the One to whom the question was put, the more we know of His character and ways, the more we see the force and value of the answer.

Why then did God forsake His Son? O reader, dost THOU know why? Dost thou know it in its bearing upon thyself personally? Canst thou say from thine inmost soul, I know why God forsook that blessed One; it was because He had taken my place, stood in my stead, and taken all my guilt upon Himself. He was made sin for me; all that I was, all that I had done, all that was due to me as a sinner 'was laid on Him. God dealt with me in the Person of my Substitute. All the sin of my

nature and all the sins of my life, all that I am and all that I have ever done, was imputed to Him. He represented me and was treated accordingly.

Say, beloved reader, has God's Spirit taught you this? Have you received this in simple faith on the authority of God's Word? If so, you must have solid peace, a peace which no power on earth or in hell, men or devils, can ever disturb. This is the true and only foundation of the soul's peace. It is utterly impossible for any soul to have real peace with God until he knows that God Himself has settled the whole question of sin and sins in the cross of His Son. God knew what was needed, and He provided it. He laid on Christ the full weight of our iniquities. God and sin met at the cross. There the whole question was divinely gone into and settled once and forever. Sin was judged and abolished. The Sin-bearer went down under the billows and waves of divine wrath. God brought Him into the dust of death. Sin was dealt with according to the infinite claims of the nature, the character, and the throne of God; and now the One who was made sin for us, and judged in our stead, is at the right hand of God exalted, crowned with glory and honor; and the very crown which adorns His blessed brow is the proof that sin is forever put away; so that ere ever a single sin can be laid to the believer's charge, that crown must be torn from the risen Savior's head.

But there is another element of ineffable preciousness and sweetness that enters into the answer to the mysterious "Why?" of the forsaken One. It is this: the amazing love of God toward us poor sinners, a love which led Him not only to give His Son from His bosom, but to bruise and forsake Him on the cross. Why did He do this? Because there was no other way possible in which we could escape. It was either a question of an eternal hell for us, or of infinite wrath for the Sin-bearer. God be praised! He chose the latter; and hence the place which Christ now occupies is the place of all who simply believe in Him.

The Friendship of the World

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Jas. 4:4. Powerful testimony! which judges the walk and searches the heart. The world's true character has now been manifested, because it has rejected and crucified the Son of God. Man had already been tried without law, and under law; but after he had shown himself to be wholly evil without law, and had broken the law when he had received it, then God Himself came in grace. He became man in order to bring the love of God home to the heart of man, having taken his nature. It was the final test of man's heart. He came not to impute sin to them, but to reconcile the world to Himself. But the world would not receive Him, and it has shown that it is under the power of Satan and of darkness. It has seen and hated both Him and His Father.

The world is ever the same world. Satan is its prince; and all that is in it—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—is not of the Father, but of the world. The heart of man, the flesh, has since the fall always been enmity against God. It is often thought and said, that since the death of Christ, Satan is no longer the prince of this world. But it was precisely then that he declared himself as its prince, leading on all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, to crucify the Savior. And although men now bear the name of Christ, the opposition of the world to His authority remains the same.

Only observe and see if the name of Christ is not dishonored. Man may indeed be taught to honor it; but it is nonetheless true that where he finds his enjoyment, where his will is free, he shuts out Christ, lest He should come in and spoil his pleasures. If left alone, he does not think of Him. He does not like to be spoken to of the Savior. He sees no beauty in Him, that he should desire Him. Man likes to do his own will, and he does not want the Lord to come and oppose it; he prefers vanity and pleasures.

We have the true history of the world and its practical principles in Cain. He had slain his brother, and was cast out of the presence of God, despairing of grace, and refusing to humble himself. By the judgment of God he was made a vagabond on the earth, but such a condition did not suit him. He settled down where God had made him a vagabond, and he called the city after the name of his son, to perpetuate the greatness of his family. That his city should be deprived of all the delights of life would have been unbearable; therefore, he multiplied riches for his son. Then another member of the family invented instruments of music; another was the instructor of artificers in brass and iron. The world being cast out from God, sought to make its position pleasant without God, to content itself at a distance from Him.

By the coming of Christ, the state of man's heart was manifested, not only as seeking the pleasures of the flesh, but as being enmity against God. However great His goodness, it would not be disturbed in the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world, nor submit itself to the authority of another; it would have the world for itself, fighting to obtain it, and snatching it from the hands of those who possessed it. Now, it is evident that the friendship of this world is enmity with God. As

far as in them lay, they cast God out of the world. and drove Him away. Man desires to be great in this world; we know that the world has crucified the Son of God, that it saw no beauty in the One in whom God finds all His delight.

Genesis 49:22

Joseph is a well-known type of Christ; but it is not every reader of the Bible who delights to trace out the application and fulfillment of the type. Take, for example, John 4:6. Why is it mentioned, "Now Jacob's well was there"? Surely to arrest our attention in some special way, and Genesis 49:22 discovers the secret. "Joseph," we read, "is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall." In this wearied Man, therefore, who in that noontide heat sat by the well of Sychar, we see the true Joseph; and even while we gaze upon Him we behold His branches running over the wall of Judaism, and reaching with their goodly fruit this poor woman of Samaria. And if not actually, yet morally (for this characterizes this gospel), the archers had sorely grieved Him, and shot at Him, and hated Him; but His bow abode in strength (vv. 23, 24), as is shown by the deliverance He wrought that day for this poor captive of Satan.

The Glory of That Light

Nothing but the apprehension of Christ Himself - Christ in glory - can detach us from this present scene, or blind us to its beauty and fascination. This is strikingly illustrated in the Apostle's account of his conversion. On his way to Damascus, armed with worldly authority against the saints of God, and filled with bitter enmity against the name of Jesus, "suddenly," he says, "there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And I answered, Who art Thou, Lord? And He said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus." Acts 22:6-11.

A complete revolution has been effected. The one who had been animated by the most deadly hatred, both against Christ and His people, is now transformed into a willing slave. "What shall I do, Lord?" expresses his changed condition, as well as the after attitude of his whole life. Besides this, we learn that he could not see for the glory of the light that had flashed upon him; and while this is to be understood as a matter of fact physically, it yet symbolizes the spiritual effect upon the Apostle of the revelation to him of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Trace out Paul's pathway from this moment, and it will be seen that thenceforward he has no eye for anything but Christ-that the vision of his soul is filled with this one blessed, glorious Object. Everything that had hitherto engaged and occupied him, everything to which he had clung, and everything which he had cherished, now lost their attraction, faded into dimness and nothingness, before the surpassing beauty and glory of the One who appeared to him when on his way to Damascus. All his precious things were seen to be but wretched tinsel by the side of the fine gold - divine righteousness - which he beheld in a glorified Christ. As he himself tells us, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ [have Christ for my gain]." Phil. 3:7, 8. The estimate he formed at first was the abiding estimate of his life. Christ was all to him, and he wanted nothing beside.

The history of the Apostle therefore teaches most important lessons. First, as has been said, nothing but Christ Himself can emancipate us from the power of present things. Many a soul is held in helpless bondage from ignorance of this truth. They desire to be freed from the influence and power of this scene, and they groan and struggle in their captivity, sighing for a deliverance that never comes. The reason is that they begin the wrong way. Instead of looking to Christ and being occupied with Him, they look to themselves and are occupied with their circumstances. The consequence is they become more enfeebled and powerless every day; whereas, if they but accepted the truth of their own utter helplessness, and directed their gaze to Christ, instead of

crying, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" they would soon shout in the joyous notes of victory, I thank God that I am delivered through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is said of the Thessalonians, for example, that they turned to God from idols (1 Thess. 1:9). If they had sought to turn themselves from idols to God, they would have remained idolaters until the day of their death. But looking first to God, who was presented to them in the gospel of His grace in Christ, they were drawn by His mighty power out from under the thralldom of Satan in the worship of false gods.

Levi is another example of the same thing. Sitting at the receipt of custom, the Lord Jesus presents Himself to him, with the word, "Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him" (Luke 5:27, 28). The attractions of Christ drew him away from all his associations, from all that might naturally have detained him, and constrained him to be, from that day forward, His devoted disciple. This is the secret of all deliverance for the soul. If the eye be but directed to and fastened upon Christ, there is power in Him to emancipate the most abject and helpless; but the condition of its reception is to be occupied with Him. Whoever would therefore be lifted above his circumstances, and follow Christ in the joyous sense of liberty, must ever maintain the attitude of beholding the glory that is displayed in His unveiled face.

Together with deliverance from the power of this scene, in the way described, there will come another thing-insensibility to its attraction. Saul could not see for the glory of that light. He was blind to all but the beauty of Christ. The light of day extinguishes all lesser lights; and the light of the glory, by the very outshining of its splendors, eclipses and extinguishes the brightest glories of earth. And just as when we have been gazing at the sun, we cannot for a time see clearly the objects of earth, so when we have been beholding the glory of the Lord, our eyes are dimmed for the things of this world. If therefore we are sensible of its fascinations, it is a sure sign that Christ has not been the constant Object of our souls; and, at the same time, it is a warning to us of the danger of allowing anything to come into competition with Himself.

When Peter, in his forgetfulness on the mount of transfiguration, said to the Lord, "Let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias," "a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 17:4, 5). God will have no competitors with His beloved Son; and thus, "When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." v. 9. Christ therefore is our only Object; and in gazing at Him we not only have fellowship with the Father, but we also find deliverance from the scene, and the attractions of the scene, through which we are passing.

"Oh, fix our earnest gaze,
So wholly, Lord, on Thee,
That with Thy beauty occupied
We elsewhere none may see!"

The Glory That Excelleth

2 Corinthians 3

This chapter contrasts two glories-that of "the letter," and that of "the Spirit" - law-glory and gospel-glory, or old and new covenant glories.

Moses, as he stood at the foot of the hill, reflected or represented the glory of the law. The children of Israel instinctively shrank from it as Adam from the voice of the Lord God in the garden. It was intolerable, and Moses had to put a veil over his face.

Moses, as he stood on the top of the hill, was in the light or sphere of the new covenant. The glory he saw was the glory of "the Lord," or of "the Spirit," the glory of God in the face of Jesus. And he necessarily took the veil off his face. This is very simple and full of comfort.

The old and new covenants are just, in this way, the contradiction one of another. The old calls on man to act for God; the new reveals God as acting for man (see Heb. 8). If the soul instinctively apprehend death in the one, it instinctively apprehends life in the other. If the old demanded a veil, the new takes it away.

The first operation therefore of the glory which Moses saw on the top of the hill was to remove his veil. The light of life was shining in that region, and Moses must walk there with open face. It was not the voice of thunder that was heard there, but the voice of the truth; and Moses could not but listen. He was all eye and ear in so happy a place. He used great plainness or openness. And Paul tells us that he was in spirit exactly one with him in all this.

The second operation of the same glory is also blessed. For as it rent the veil off Paul's face, so did it leave its own impression on his face. This was another virtue which was in it. With unveiled face Paul beheld that glory, and was changed into the same image from glory to glory. And he lets us see through this Second Epistle to the Corinthians, how in various rays or features of glory, he was manifesting the truth of the new covenant, or savoring of Christ, and thus changed into the same image.

Here, however, a distinction full of beauty and of comfort presents itself. The first of these operations is perfect, because it was accomplished solely by the Lord on Moses or Paul. When they turned to the Lord, the veil was taken away, as it will be from Israel by-and-by. The second of them is imperfect, because it was carried on by the Spirit in Paul. It was a progressive operation meeting with resistance from nature in Paul. We are not to measure the one by the other. This is comforting. We are not to say, Because I am not fully changed into the same image, therefore is the veil not entirely taken away. This very scripture resents such a conclusion, because it shows the veil gone altogether, but the image only coming as it were progressively. Indeed, it teaches us to say this-that the veil was no more able to stand the light of the glory which shone on the top of the hill, than the Israelite was able to stand the light of the glory which shone at the foot of the hill. The face of a sinner cannot abide the one, nor the veil on his face the other. But it likewise teaches

us that the second of these operations is also very excellent.

The Apostle sought to reflect that glory before which he was set, as well as to enjoy it. And as I have said before, the exhibition of this in varied ways, is very much the business of this epistle. The early chapters present the Apostle in much of the spirit, and in many of the leading moral energies, of his ministry; and such he expressly connects with the Lord and the truth which he had received, and before whom he was walking. Thus, his stability (chap. 1:17-22)-his healing a repentent brother (chap. 2:5-10)-his being a savor to God in all his ministry (chap. 2:14-17) - his not fainting in his labors, and his renunciation of all deceit or dishonesty (chap. 4:1, 2) - his dying daily (chap. 4:10, 11) -his hoping for resurrection (chap. 4:13, 14)-his personal devotedness (chap. 5:14, 15)-these and other characteristics of his service in the churches, he exhibits as so many reflections of that glory he was beholding, and into the image of which he was, as from glory to glory, changing. The third chapter is thus, in the midst of this, a disclosing of the spring of all that grace and strength he was exhibiting in his labors in the gospel. And this is real ministry.

What beautiful rays of glory shine in this way! And they are but reflections, faint reflections, of that great original glory, the glory of God in the face of Jesus, which he was ever beholding. And then what wondrous consolation springs to our souls from this! For if Paul could thus serve-if he could walk in such ways of personal grace and devotedness in the midst of temptations and sorrows, and all this for others - what riches and glory of grace must we have to do with and to trust in, seeing that his ways are but the reflections of all that! This is, indeed, consolation. The glory which Moses reflected caused him to hide himself, for he could not bear it; the glory which Paul reflected brought him into the midst of the need and sorrow of others, there to act in full self devotedness and grace.

Godly Sensibilities Without Godly Energy: Genesis 27

Genesis 27

What moral illustrations that beautiful book of Genesis does afford us; what a variety of character is exhibited for our warning and instruction. Isaac takes his place in the midst of these characters thus produced and presented - and for a saint we get in him but a poor sample. He had godly sensibilities as well as human, amiable virtues, but he had not godly energy. He reminds us of Jehoshaphat in other days. Jehoshaphat had godly sensibilities, but he failed in godly energy. Through vanity he failed; he joined affinity with Ahab, and had not strength to refuse to go to the battle with him. But still he had sensibilities in his soul that were spiritual and of divine workmanship-for in the midst of the prophets of Baal he was not satisfied. He had a witness within that this would not do; and he asked, "Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides?" But strange and humbling to tell it, he would still go to the battle in company with the very Ahab who had thus wounded the spiritual sensibilities that stirred in his soul, and who had thus in infidel revolt from the God of Israel consulted the prophets of Baal. (2 Chron. 18.)

This was terrible, but this was that king Jehoshaphat.

Isaac, so, on this occasion had his sensibilities, but not his corresponding energies. It was not through vanity, as did Jehoshaphat, that he failed; it was rather through a general relaxed moral tone of soul, that sought ease and indulgence; but while Isaac, with a godly mind, could grieve over Esau's marriage with a daughter of Heth, one of the people of the land, that very Esau is Isaac's object, and keeps and holds the dearest affections of his heart, so that Isaac cannot give himself back for God. He would fain help the profane Esau to a blessing, as Jehoshaphat would help the idolatrous Ahab to the victory.

What sights are these, and what lessons and warnings to our souls!

The Gold Wire: Exodus 39:3

Exod. 39:3

"And they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, with cunning work."

In the "fine twined linen" we have a type of the spotless manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ; and in the gold wire we have an equally striking and beautiful type of His Godhead. The Spirit of God delights in presenting the Person and work of Christ. Every type, every figure, every ordinance of the Mosaic ritual, is fragrant with the odor of His precious name. It matters not how insignificant, apparently, the circumstance may be; if only it expresses something of Christ, it is unspeakably valuable in the judgment of the Holy Ghost.

"The blue," "the purple," "the scarlet," and "fine twined linen" exhibit the varied features of Christ's perfect humanity; but the manner in which the gold wire was mingled with these materials, in making Aaron's priestly garments, is worthy of special attention. The wire of gold was cunningly wrought into all the others, so as to be inseparably connected with, and yet perfectly distinct from, them.

The application of all this to the Lord Jesus is full of interest. In varied scenes throughout the gospel narrative, we can easily discern this rare and beautiful union of manhood and Godhead; and, at the same time, their mysterious distinctness.

Look, for example, at Christ on the Sea of Galilee. In the midst of the storm, He was "asleep on a pillow" - precious exhibition of His perfect manhood! But, in a moment, He rises from the attitude of real humanity into all the dignity and majesty of Godhead; and, as the supreme Governor of the universe, He hushes the storm and calms the sea. There is no effort- no haste- no girding of Himself for an occasion. With perfect ease, He rises from the condition of positive humanity into the sphere of essential Deity. The repose of the former is not more natural than the activity of the latter. He is as perfectly at home in the one as in the other.

Again, see Him in the case of the collectors of tribute, at the close of Matthew 17. As the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, He lays His hand upon the treasures of the ocean, and says, They are all Mine. And having declared that the sea is His and He made it, He turns round, and, in the exhibition of perfect humanity, He links Himself with His poor servant by those touching words, "that take, and give unto them for Me and thee." Gracious words, peculiarly gracious when taken in connection with the miracle so entirely expressive of the Godhead of the One who was thus linking Himself, in infinite condescension, with a poor feeble disciple.

Once more, see Him at the grave of Lazarus (John 11). He groans and weeps, and those groans and tears issue from the profound depths of a perfect manhood - from that perfect human heart which felt, as no other heart could feel, what it was to stand in the midst of a scene in which sin had produced such terrible fruits. But, then, as the resurrection and the life, as the One who held in

His omnipotent grasp power over death and the grave, He cries, "Lazarus, come forth"; and death and the grave, responsive to His authoritative voice, throw open their massive doors and let go their captive.

My reader's mind will easily recur to other scenes in the gospel illustrative of the beautiful combination of the wire of gold with "the blue,... the purple,... the scarlet,... the fine linen"; that is to say, the union of the Godhead with the manhood, in the blessed Person of the Son of God. There is nothing new in the thought. It has often been noticed by those who have studied, with any amount of care, the scriptures of the Old Testament.

It is, however, always edifying to have the blessed Lord Jesus introduced to our thoughts as very God and very man. The Holy Ghost has, with "cunning" workmanship, wrought the two together, and presented them to the renewed mind of the believer, to be enjoyed and admired.

May we have hearts to appreciate such teaching! Nothing can keep up the tone and freshness of the spiritual life save abiding communion with the Person of Christ. Outward forms of religion, ordinances, ceremonies, creeds, doctrines, meetings - in a word, the entire machinery of systematic religiousness- may leave the soul dull, barren, and lifeless; but when the soul is filled with Christ, there is freshness and power.

May the reader taste the deep blessedness of having the blood of Jesus sprinkled on his conscience, the name of Jesus engraved on his heart, and the coming of Jesus as the one Object before his soul's vision.

The Grace of Christ

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

He Will Be With Thee

"He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed" (Deut. 31:8).

The disciples thought that angry sea separated them from Jesus. Some of them thought even worse than that; they thought that the trouble that had come upon them was a sign that Jesus had forgotten all about them, and did not care for them. O dear friend, that is when troubles have a sting, when the devil whispers, God has forgotten you; God has forsaken you-when your unbelieving heart cries as Gideon cried, "If the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" (Judg. 6:13).

The trial has come upon us to bring the Lord nearer to us. The trial has not come upon us to separate us from Him, but to make us cling to Him more faithfully, more tenaciously, more simply.

Hearing and Following

John 10:27

If there be one lack in souls at the present time more marked than another, it is feebleness of apprehension as to these two great points.

The quietness of communion is but little known, not to say enjoyed, in this busy active day. How truly the moment speaks loudly of unrest and unreality; and how little is known even among the saints of that deep, personal, unexpressed joy in Christ.

The satisfaction of the heart in the personal nearness of the Lord, the being in His company for the simple joy of it, is true communion; thus it is we have common mind with Him, which is the meaning of communion. When this is the case, we know the mind of our Lord and Master, and this it is which qualifies us for every service as Christ's confidential servants, rather than the amount of our service or the laboriousness of our work.

There is a very close alliance, a very intimate connection, between the two attitudes of soul we are considering; in fact, they wait the one on the other. It is very blessed to see the producing and maintaining power, of hearing and following Christ. In a word, it is Christ. He and He alone is the blessed source and spring of all that has its rise and satisfaction in Himself. To be a good listener, one must be both free and at rest. My reader, are you? The blessed Son, ever the Father's delight, ever in the bosom of the Father, came into a world of slavery and sorrow, to bring both liberty to the captives and opening of the prison to those that were bound, as well as relief of conscience and rest of heart to every weary soul. His work and Person alone can give freedom and rest. It is sad to see how little of either exists around us; the disquietude of the age infects the saints, not only in the things that relate to this life, but even in their relationships with God they have not the fixed, settled peace which cannot be moved.

With many at the present time it is, as it were, but the dawn of union with Christ, the full day in soul consciousness not having yet come; with them it is like "the morning spread upon the mountains" (Joel 2:2), and hence there is little if any repose; unsatisfied longings, ardent desires as yet unmet, abound in many a heart; but oh, how one longs to see His own people possessing conscious knowledge of union with Christ glorified in the place where He is; this alone can impart rest of heart, and detach from earth and its things! Thus alone it is that the soul listens, absorbed with Him who is its rest. The ear once engaged with other sounds now does homage at His feet, and waits upon His words, knowing how to interpret all the tones of His voice, and to treasure them up in the soul.

What could be more blessed than an ear at leisure from self and its surroundings to wait on the word of Jesus? Then it is that we sit down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit is sweet to our taste. Is not this the house of wine where He delights to entertain His own during the weary hours of this far spent night? It is surprising how little any of us know what real solitude with God is. And may I not ask, How is it possible to grow in personal acquaintance with Christ, if the

solitude of His company is not sought after and cultivated by His saints? I hope I may not be understood by any as undervaluing the outward means of instruction and soul refreshment which abound on every hand; nothing could be more distant from my thoughts; but I do say that none of these by themselves, nor all of them together, can replace the loss of meditative solitude with God.

It is interesting to see this illustrated in the history of Elijah; remarkable servant of God though he was, it is clear that his life inwardly was not sustained in proportion to his outward testimony. With him the fire, wind, and earthquake were everything; and when outward testimony excited the malignity of the enemy, as is usual, his faith was not equal to the pressure. But mark the blessed tender way of Jehovah with His poor servant.

1) He is called to go and stand before the Lord, thus proving that solitude is useless unless it be with God. We may be even as he was, under a juniper tree, or in a cave (1 Kings 19:4, 9), but that is only the solitude of disappointed nature; there is neither liberty, nor rest, nor listening in that. Oh no, it must be with God. "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD."

The demands of nature must not be yielded to. This is typified by the prophet's fasting forty days and forty nights; that which had been supplied to him was the providing of Jehovah's hand - even a "cake baked" and "a cruse of water" supplies outside nature, in the strength of which all its claims could be set aside.

The consequence of the two former, the prophet listens - he hears "a still small voice," and thus receives communications and commissions which previously would have been unintelligible to him.

Following seems to come in as a consequence of what we have had before us: "My sheep hear My voice... and they follow Me." As it is the Shepherd's voice that is heard and known by the sheep, so it is the Shepherd Himself they follow; He it is who has gone before. In the passage quoted from John 10, we find the blessed Lord, scorned and reproached, leaving the ancient fold of Judaism, and thus going before His sheep, the security to all His own that it was the true way, as well as the authority for the sheep following Him, come what might, their hiding place from danger, and their safe conduct for the way.

It is very blessed to see how it is the knowing His voice here (vv. 4, 5), not that they know all the false voices of strangers; but their security is in knowing His voice, and they likewise follow as they know it. My reader, has your heart found one whom you are now following? Is this your one object day by day? It is very blessed to be allowed to serve, but many a one serves in this day who is not following. O for more distinct going forth from all around to follow a rejected Lord and Master, and to esteem it our holiest joy to tread the path He has walked in, rough it may be, but trodden by Himself.

"A little while, He'll come again!

Let us the precious hours redeem;

Our only grief to give Him pain,

Our joy to serve and follow Him."

The Heart of the Scriptures

There is great moral value in learning prophetic truths in or through the Psalms, because they are not there treated as mere doctrines, but are handled and felt there by the varied passions of the soul. Thus, Paul teaches us that "blindness in part is happened to Israel," or that "the branches were broken off" (Rom. 11:25 and 19). This is a proposition to be understood and believed. But the same truth is conveyed in the Psalms (65:3) in the words, "Iniquities prevail against me"-not, however, as a mere doctrine, as it is given to us in the style of the epistles, but as that which was, as it were, breaking the heart of a poor Jew when he thought of it. So, "All Israel shall be saved," is another teaching or doctrine of the Apostle Paul. But it is conveyed in the same psalm in this style "our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away" - not, therefore, simply as a proposition, but as the exulting anticipation of the same poor brokenhearted Israelite.

And thus it is that there is a moral value in learning truths through the Psalms. For there is a tendency in us to apprehend truth as an object or a proposition by the mind, and then just to talk about it. But in the Psalms, truth is delivered in company with the passions of the soul. The Psalms are, if I may so speak, THE HEART of the divine volume. They lie in the midst of the body, and there the pulses are felt; there the blood emanates and returns; there the affections of the renewed man find their seat and exercise. And it is safe to be there at times, yea, and to use other scriptures according to the manner learned and practiced there.

Heavenly Streams: Fresh Hearts

Are your souls, I would ask, familiar with that grace of the Father in having chosen and accepted you in the Son of His love before the foundation of the world? Do you find in it power that separates you from the world? I believe we are now in a very peculiar stage of its history, the powers of darkness letting loose a vortex of evil of every kind, and many a child of God will be caught in it if not walking with God.

Some, like Lot, may have to be dragged up out of Sodom. Not that God will not keep His people, in one sense; but it is not only that, He also wants them to have the experience of what His love is, in such largeness that it will keep their hearts fresh with heavenly streams, fresh in blessed and divine thoughts. They who know all that Father's divine love, have a fountain overflowing from heaven. Are you drinking of it?

Hurry, Worry, Wait

How very few persons there are to be found who do not know the meaning of these two first words! In a single day, it is an oft-repeated expression, "Oh, do make haste! I am in such a hurry-, I cannot wait!" Does not hurry bring worry, and cause wasted strength?

Even when we were children, do we not remember the spirit of impatience that prompted us to help the crocus out of its silver covering -the arum to unfold a little quicker-to just give a touch to the slowly developing leaf of the India rubber plant? For we longed to see them expand; but, alas! our childish fingers hurried God's work, and spoiled that which would have been beautiful had it had the whole time He intended to give it to expand in. How many children ask for the unripe fruit, and will take no denial! It looks pretty, though green; it must be nice. The fruit is gathered and given; it has no sweetness, all because it needed time and sunshine.

Never be in haste, except about two things. Haste to be saved; make haste to obey God's commands.

The angels had to hasten Lot from the land of Sodom, and all his family (Gen. 19:15-17).

David sets a good example of cheerful obedience, after having thought on his ways: "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." Psalm 119:60.

We have lately entered on a new year; the past may have been one of wrong hurry- of worry and unrest. And because we have yielded to this, our peace has been disturbed, our spirits fretted, and communion lost. Trials have come and gone; have we learned in any measure the truth of Isa. 28:16, "He that believeth shall not make haste"? Believing in the Lord and His power gives patience, and the questioning spirit of, Why? and, How? is lulled to rest.

There is so much said about waiting on the Lord in the Scriptures - so much to encourage patience. Wait on the Lord all the day (Psalm 25:5; 27:14). Do not do it once and then leave off, but "wait... continually" (Hos. 12:6); then, "wait thou only upon God" (Psalm 62:5). If we will do this in all trouble and difficulty, God is so gracious that He will show us His way and means of deliverance.

"He changeth not; He faileth never;

So trust in Him today - forever."

Again we are told to wait patiently. The experience of some may be, "We wait for light, but behold obscurity" (Isa. 59:9; Job 30:26). God wants to shut us up to Himself. There is not a chink of light-but wait. Every hope is gone-but wait. It is dark all around - but wait. It is true, man's extremity is God's opportunity. Tried, tempted, discouraged one, listen! "The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him" (Lam. 3:25). "Blessed are all they that wait for Him" (Isa. 30:18). What grieved the Lord so with Israel of old? "They waited not for His counsel" (Psalm 106:13). And have we not thus grieved Him also many times, not waiting for His counsel and direction?

Oh, let us learn to wait on the Lord. He may try our faith, but there is no truer promise - "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me" (Isa. 49:23).

No hurry, no worry, can we have if we "wait on the LORD."

"We wait His time; so shall the night

Soon end in blissful day."

Behold, I Come Quickly

All is uncertain, but the Lord's coming draws nigh, and before long we shall all meet in the air to be forever with Him. What a prospect! What a hope! May the Lord keep us true and faithful and watching till He comes.

We may hear the shout before long-it is a precious waiting time. We do "groan within ourselves" (Rom. 8:23). We feel the force of these precious words, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Jas. 5:8) more and more each day, do we not?

In All Thy Ways

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Pro. 3:6.

He is willing to be our guide in the smallest things of life. Before writing an article, answering a letter, having an interview, or dealing with any problem, we need to look up to Him who is the source of all wisdom. Look at the promise that follows:

"He shall direct thy paths."

By day and by night, He went before His people in the wilderness. He will not do less for those who today acknowledge Him in all their ways.

Incidents in the Life of Gideon: Part 1

This afternoon I would like to trace some of the incidents in the life of Gideon-Judges 6.

Before turning to that, perhaps we might read a few verses in the 11th of Hebrews, beginning at the 32nd verse:

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of, Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 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."

Going down to the 39th verse we read:

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

Now turn back to the 6th of Judges. We read from Heb. 11:32 that time would fail to tell of Gideon; that is just exactly the way I feel as I stand here this afternoon.

What a full history is given of this man, Gideon. We could not take the time to read all his history if we expect to have any time left to put together a few thoughts in connection with his life. We find that God raised him up in the history of Israel at a very peculiar time-in the days of the Judges (queer days they were)-when there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

You know when things are like that-every man doing that which is right in his own eyes-everything is wrong. That was the condition back in those days of the Judges. Joshua, the great spiritual leader, had been called off the scene and gathered unto the fathers at the age of one hundred and ten years. A wonderful servant he had been-a faithful man. There arises a new generation; how different now that they do not have a Joshua to lead them. They slumped back into idolatry, the grossest kind of failure and worldliness, and God let them smart for it too.

The ways of God are always consistent with Himself. Dispensations change, but God's character does not. The Word of God says, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7, 8). This is true of individuals; it is true of families; it is true of assemblies; it is true of states and nations. There is that law at work-God's government. Thank God, it is always tempered with His mercy. That is true; but when you and I go contrary to the revealed will of God, we can expect nothing else than to reap the consequences.

So the children of Israel lapsed back again and again into the most awful idolatry and moral failure. Again and again God sold them into the hand of their enemies, that they might learn their lesson. He allowed them to be ground between the upper and nether millstones of His judgment until there

was a measure of repentance; and then He raised up a deliverer for them. Such was the condition with which the 6th chapter of Judges opens.

The children of Israel were in a sad plight. Joshua had brought them into their own promised land; he had divided the inheritance to them. They had promised faithfully that they would see that all the enemies of God were destroyed, but it was only a lip promise. We find at this time that their enemies had the upper hand. The Midianites were swooping in upon them and robbing them of everything they had, from time to time.

"And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass." Judg. 6:4.

That was the condition. They would sow and get their crop ready to harvest, and here would come in all these great hordes, the children of the East, and gather up all the crops; and off they would go and leave the children of Israel in a pitiable condition-"greatly impoverished."

We look around us today and view the Church of God. And when one uses that term (the Church of God), he uses it, I trust, after the thoughts of God. The Church of God is that professing body that is set in this world as the "pillar and ground of the truth"-that which should have supported the great fundamentals of the faith down through the ages of the Church's sojourn here. What do we see as we look around? We see that the "Midianites" have the upper hand. The very fact that in this gathering here today there are so few of us, is a testimony to this condition. The enemies of the revealed truth of God have the upper hand in Christendom around us, and the saints of God have been robbed and robbed and robbed, and are still being robbed!

Sometimes we attend the funeral of a neighbor or friend. I had that privilege (if you can call it that) just recently. A man who stood as the representative of the pastors of God's flock had a splendid opportunity to tell the people assembled about the merits of Christ. If I counted correctly, he mentioned the Lord Jesus once in his address. The greater part of what he said was false to the truth of God. One's heart was woefully heavy as he sat and listened to such a great travesty. The "Midianites" had gotten in their work with that man, and he was passing it on down to another generation. And so today in Christendom, in the professing church of God, it is comparable to the days of the Judges; every man is doing that which is right in his own eyes. But, I repeat, if you find in your heart a disposition to take that course, you are plainly declaring that you are headed for that which is wrong.

The children of Israel were in "bondage," "slavery," "hard put to"; and they did not have enough to eat; they were miserable and they "cried to God."

In the midst of that condition there was a young man. The 6th chapter opens with this young man threshing wheat by his father's winepress. I believe that there is something expressive in that. Gideon was determined that he would have wheat. He was doing it at the risk of his life, that is true; but Gideon, by the grace of God, resolved that he would have wheat He had a right and title to it, and he would have it; and there he was threshing wheat by his' father's winepress to "hide it from the Midianites."

That wheat speaks of Christ, the Bread which came down from heaven, the food for your soul and mine. So here in this young man, Gideon, we see a young man of faith and courage, determined

that he is going to have his portion of Christ, if I speak figuratively. I do not say that Gideon had the consciousness of all this, but I believe the Spirit of God indicted it, and that we may take that meaning from it. He is determined to have his portion of Christ.

Dear saints here this afternoon, you are living in a trying age; your lot is cast in a stormy period, and if the Lord tarries and you are left to grow up to middle age and on, I dare say you are going to see serious times-perhaps more serious than you ever stopped to think about. Perhaps some of us who are older may be released from the scene before the storm breaks, but there are dark clouds gathering. I want to impress on you this afternoon, regardless of whatever confronts you in your Christian life from now until you leave this world, whether by way of the grave or the coming of the Lord, your God is able to deliver. That blessed Lord never mocks us; oh no, God does not mock us. He does not call you out from the world and put upon you the blessed, precious name of Christ, and at the same time cast you into the world where you cannot live for Him. He would deny Himself if He were to place you in temptations and surroundings where you could not be true to Christ. So you need not fear the future.

Do not take the attitude that you are equal to whatever comes along; one cannot advise that, but one can say to you that God is not going to permit the trial to overcome you; He will provide a way of escape that you may be able to bear it. So face the future with confidence, but with Christ. If we face the future in self-confidence, there is many a sad lesson ahead for us; and some of us who are older have had occasion to observe this in the lives of those we have known intimately; they are paying heavy tribute to the "Midianites"; they are like Samson grinding in the mills of the Philistines, helpless, seemingly, to extricate themselves; when you try to help some of them, you feel your utter inability. It is one thing to get away from God and get yourself thoroughly into the world, and it is quite another thing to get free and back. These tragedies are strewn all along the way. It is a sobering thought to look into the faces of those present and realize that there may be some here who have already taken the early steps in a pathway like that-those whose feet are already slipping. It is a slippery way. May God give you, in His great grace, to recover yourselves today, that you may just bow to the voice that speaks here, and recover yourselves out of the hand of the enemy.

The Spirit of God introduces in this very chapter, a prophet; he comes to the children of Israel and tells them why they are suffering, though God does not even give us his name --a nameless prophet, but he speaks the truth. He tells them that they had rebelled against their God and His Word. Dear soul, if you are slipping today, it is because the Word of God is being neglected. It is because prayer is being neglected. It is because that soul of yours is not being kept in the sunshine of His love. You cannot go wrong and go on with Christ. If you and I are seeking His face in dependence, seeking to have His 'Word do its cleansing work in our lives, if we are in reality bowing the knee to God in prayer, He will keep us; He will keep you, dear young believer; He will preserve you unto His heavenly kingdom.

Gideon was threshing wheat by his father's winepress, and an angel appeared to him. There is a connection between these two things. The Spirit of God discerned a determination and a holy purpose of heart not to sell out to the enemy; God recognized that and sent His angel to greet Gideon.

"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." He was not handling a sword, but a flail-a humble instrument. "Thou mighty man of valor." Dear young soul here this afternoon, it means ten thousandfold more to God to see you in the courage and energy of faith enjoying your portion in Christ, than to go over there on the battlefields of Europe and gain a mighty victory; God is far more interested in your spiritual welfare than in any victory you might achieve in this world. These are spiritual battles, and they are going to endure when all the nations locked in this present conquest have passed off the scene forever. They "are counted as the small dust of the balance" (Isa. 40:15). That is the way God thinks of the rise and fall of the nations.

God meets Gideon and commissions him for a great work. "And Gideon said unto Him, O my Lord, If the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" v. 13. There is something instructive here. Gideon is not swept off his feet at this moment because an angelic messenger accosts him. He is so absorbed that when he gets this commission as a mighty man of valor, he says, "Why then is all this befallen"-not me- but "us"? Gideon is thinking of all Israel. He is bearing on his heart all that people; he felt the burden of their condition. Have you ever borne up in the presence of God the condition of His people today? Does it form any part of your private program of prayer that the vast majority of God's dear people are in the hands of the "Midianites" and are being robbed and impoverished day after day and week after week? Does it form any part of the burden of your heart and mine? Gideon says, "Why then is all this befallen us?" He identifies himself with the case of the whole nation. That is like a scene we have brought before us in the New Testament-Nathanael under the fig tree. He is brought to Christ, and as the Lord looks at him He says, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" He says, Nathanael, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." What did He mean? The fig tree is a picture of Israel-God's people. No doubt the Spirit of God means to tell us that Nathanael was in prayer and meditation under that fig tree, thinking of the state of the nation at that time, and that is what singled him out; that is what made him important-a true Israelite thinking of the people of God and the sad condition of the nation at that time. The Lord made him one of His disciples.

Incidents in the Life of Gideon: Part 2

The next characteristic we see in this man Gideon, we have in the 14th verse: "And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"

What was his might? That God sent him! That is all the might you need. If God sends you, if He commissions you, He will be with you; He will be your strength.

Now we find the true state of the man coming out. And he says, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel?" What am I? "Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." What a wonderful confession! That is the kind of person God can use. It was Gideon's very weakness that was the source of his strength; that was the reason God appeared to the man; it was the spirit of the man. God as much as says, That is the kind of man I can use. Does not the Word of God say, "When I am weak, then am I strong"? Indeed it does.

"The time would fail me to tell of Gideon"-and so it will ---but we will just anticipate a little.

Further on, he faced the time when there was a whole host encamped against him. What was the difficulty that confronted him? Not that he had too few with him, but he had too many! He got rid of 22,000, then 10,000, and finally simmered down to 300 men (Judges 7). What a tremendous slaughter and cleaning out of the Midianites results from that little handful! It was not multitudes they needed-it was not the power of man's arm they needed-it was not the arm of flesh they needed. They needed to feel their weakness, and when they did, God gave them the victory. It is a grand thing if, by the grace of God, we can go on feeling our weakness. God does not despise weakness.

When the Lord Jesus was here it was said of Him, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench." Isn't that lovely? A bruised reed-of what account is it? He will not break it. That blessed, gentle Man would not break that bruised reed. And "smoking flax"-that is a lamp with a flaxen wick. It is smoking-not giving much light. He will not quench it-not put it out. He will tenderly remove the crust and coax it back until it gives light. God does not despise weakness. Saints of God, do not surrender and give yourselves up to indifference because you have little gift, or because there are only a few. Numbers do not count with God; they do not.

Go through the life of the blessed Lord Jesus and see how often you find His ministry to one individual; He was not too busy to sit down and spend an hour with some lone individual man or woman. He was not too big a Man to listen to little children. That blessed Man went up and down the pathways of Galilee and, except for that little trip up around Tire and Sidon, so far as I know, He was never out of that country, save as a Babe in His mother's arms. He was not too busy for the small things of life.

Now we find Gideon knows what communion is, and he brings an offering to God, and God accepts it-perhaps not in the way that Gideon expected, but in a much better way-not as a present,

but as a sacrifice. What was the result? Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it Jehovah-shalom -The Lord send peace.

Now there is peace, there is communion, and Gideon can go forth to battle. He is ready to go forth in the cause of his Lord. First, he learned his nothingness, and then he learned that the Lord was his peace; and now he is in a position to do the will of the Lord.

Sometimes when we think we would like to do a little something for the Lord, we are rather disappointed because we find it begins so near home. Is not that the truth? The Lord said to one who wanted to follow Him, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." Gideon had to start at home, and is that not true with us? What kind of Christians are we at home? What about the home folks? Sometimes we find ourselves in positions very difficult. So did Gideon; his father was an idolater. Isn't that sad? He had an altar to Baal, and Gideon gets the commission to break down that altar and do away with it. That is quite a responsibility, to take his own father's bullock and offer it for a burnt offering, destroy the altar of Baal, and establish the worship of the true God.

Gideon is not a self-confident soul; he has becoming modesty; there is a bit of fear; he is like Timothy, a timid soul. He gathers his company together and says, We will do this by night; I am afraid to do it in the daytime. God bore with that. Dear soul, God will bear with your timidity; He will bear with that kind of thing far better than arrogant self-confidence and pride. So Gideon and his company went forth in the middle of the night and cut down the image of Baal and the grove; and when morning dawned, all had disappeared, and there was the altar to the true God. What will his father say? Did you ever feel that way about the folks at home? Have you a father who is not in sympathy with your stand? You might have those at home who would seek to hinder your following the Lord. Earthly relationships do not count if the glory of Christ is at stake. "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." Luke 14:26. Does that sound extreme? Does it sound cruel? It isn't. The Lord had a right to say that, dear friend. Anything in this world that offers competition in your life and in your heart to loyalty to Christ is a hateful thing, regardless of what it is. We know the Lord does not want you to hate your father, or mother, etc.; but He meant if you were allowing that affection for them to keep you from following Christ, you are to cast it from you as a thing detestable to Christ. The sooner that thing is judged and set aside, the better. God came in and honored Gideon's faith, and many times it is like that. Gideon's father sided in with him. He saw the folly of it all and said, "Will ye plead for Baal?... if he be a god, let him plead for himself." We might say his father got converted.

We see in the end of the chapter that Gideon is a timid soul again, and he puts out a fleece; first he wants dew to be on the fleece only and dry upon all the earth; then he wants the fleece to be dry and upon all the ground dew. Do we not marvel at the patience of God! I want to tell you, if my God and Father had not been infinitely patient with me, I would not be speaking to you here this afternoon. He has patience with our weakness, with our timidity, and our failures. He never excuses sin. He has no patience for sins, but for our weakness and failure He has infinite patience. So He answers Gideon according to his request, and now Gideon gets his army together.

We have already seen how he sorted that army down to three hundred men. What marked those three hundred men? When they stooped to drink, they did not put their mouths to the surface of

the water, but scooped up the water and lapped, putting their hand to their mouth. Why? I do not know that I am right, but they could not be very watchful with their heads down and lips to the surface of the water; they would not know much about what was going on around them. These men were on the watch, and while refreshing themselves their eyes were scanning the horizon, ready for any surprise the enemy might seek to bring upon them. "Watch" is the word for us. "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:37)

We are not all alike; some of us too forward and some too backward. Some of us are too timid and some too self confident.

God knew what kind of a man Gideon was, and said to him, "Arise, get thee down to the host;... but if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant" (isn't that nice?). As it were, He says, I want you to slip down and listen to what is going on in the camp of the enemy. They went down and heard a man telling a strange dream: "A cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it," etc. "And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host."

He got his answer from the lips of the enemy themselves, and he and his armor bearer made their way back to the host of Israel. How can they lack any confidence now? When that army of three hundred men started out, it was the strangest army I suppose the world ever saw. They went out with a candle in a pitcher in one hand, and a trumpet in the other; there is not a word about a sword. When the proper signal was given, they broke their pitchers and blew the trumpets and cried, "The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon." The usual way was to have one trumpet for perhaps a thousand men, so when there were three hundred trumpets, the enemy thought they were surrounded by a tremendous multitude and were mad with fear and turned every one upon another in the most awful civil war. Chaos broke out, and they kept at it all night long; and the next morning there were a hundred and twenty thousand corpses. What a scene! What brought it to pass? "The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon." What was his sword? Obedience to the word of God. He followed directions; and dear soul, that is worth, everything. He got the victory. Isn't that wonderful on God's part to include Gideon in that? Oh yes, God is pleased to use human instrumentality. God could get along without any one of us. He could convert every soul that is going to inhabit heaven without you and without the speaker! But He condescends to use us. It is by the preached word that God reaches souls, and we are workers together with God. What a great honor that is! The enemy is put down, and Israel is mightily delivered.

We will hasten on because "the time would fail to tell of Gideon." The people now are not thinking so much about the "sword of the LORD"; they are thinking about Gideon. So long as Gideon was a vessel and felt his nothingness, he got along fine; God was with him; the pitcher was broken, and the light shone out. But now the people begin to flatter Gideon, and they want to make him a king; they want to make something of the servant. Is not that sad? It is a picture of what is taking place around us in Christendom today.

I was a day late in getting to this meeting. I had a funeral service on Saturday. When I got there, a paper was handed me, and I saw there that I was the "Reverend-." Perhaps that causes a smile to go over the audience, but I did not tell it to smile at. What does God think of flattering and exalting titles in the sacred and holy things of God? Turn to Psalm 111:9, and there you will see the Lord

addressed as "holy and reverend is His name." I believe that is the only place in the Bible that word "reverend" is used. It tells a story of what has happened in Christendom: making much of the servant, exalting man; but what havoc it has wrought! It is Nicolaitanism; God says He hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans.

They come to Gideon and want to make him a king. "And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you." Isn't that lovely? His answer is orthodox all right, but the man's heart is already away from the Lord; he can utter pious things, but his heart is not right.

"And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey. And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; besides ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that were about their camels' necks. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house." Judg. 8:22-27.

That is sad, isn't it? Gideon was willing to accept a little flattery. He wanted the earrings, jewels, and ornaments taken from the prey; and they became a stumbling block to his people, himself, and his house. There is a warning there for us, dear saints of God. You may be used of the Lord mightily, as Gideon was, but if you do not keep that same meekness and lowliness that characterized him as humble and broken in spirit, you are going to get away from the Lord. When Gideon got away from the Lord, he took others with him. When you get away from the Lord, you are going to take others with you. His own son got into the snare.

God does not say a word about that in the 11th of Hebrews; it is omitted. God is there giving a record of those men as men of faith, not as men of failure; they are going to be in that glorious resurrection in that coming day, "that they without us should not be made perfect." They are candidates for that better resurrection. He passes over all their failure; isn't that lovely! That is the kind of God and Father we have. Down here in this world we have to reap the fruit of our ways. Yes, we do; but thank God, when we get through the wilderness journey, when we are gathered home to the Father's house, we will be there without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Dear young people, it is a wonderful thing to be a child of God-to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, and to seek according to the measure of our faith to live for Him the little time we are left here.

Israel: the Land and the People

Several of our readers have suggested that because of the recent developments in the Middle East and the continuing unrest in that area, we reprint the following article by our late brother Paul Wilson which originally was published in our issues of May and June 1958. Since the land of Israel has been the center of so much interest in recent months, we believe it timely to again bring this to our readers' attention.

Part 1

May 14 is a memorable date in contemporary history, for on that day in 1948 the new State of Israel was born. Simultaneously with the withdrawal of the last British troops which had occupied Palestine under a League of Nations mandate, the Palestinian Jewish leaders announced to the world that they had established a sovereign state; they were henceforth to be reckoned among the world-family of nations. This was no ordinary, everyday event; it was of epochal significance and almost an incredible event, for since the remote year of A.D. 70 the Jews had no national polity or even center of religion. They had been dispersed to all points of the compass.

The prophet Hosea had announced that the Jews were to be "wanderers among the nations" and abide "many days" without a king or a prince, and without the appointed means of the worship of God; for they were to have no sacrifice, or official priest wearing the "ephod." God had further announced that they were to be unwelcome people in many lands of their dispersion, for they were to "be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure." (See Hos. 3:4 and 8.8.) This has been their condition for almost two millennia. They have been ostracized and proscribed in one nation after another. They were driven out of Rome, Spain, England, and other nations in turn. They met the inquisition, the pogroms, and the gas chambers, and were deprived of a means of livelihood time and again. They were confined in ghettos, and forbidden to own land; yet they lived and continued as a distinct people.

We should not fail to see the hand of God in all this. In Old Testament times they turned from the living and true God to worship the idols of the heathen, and God turned them over to Nebuchadnezzar for chastisement. After 70 years of exile in Babylon, a remnant was permitted to return under the Persian monarch's favor (as had been prophetically foretold in Isa. 44:26 through 45:4). But they were not masters of their own possessions or bodies; they were beholden to Gentile sovereigns for all things. Nehemiah described their plight in these words: "Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that Thou gavest unto our fathers,... we are servants in it: and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom Thou hast set over us:... also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress." Neh. 9:36, 37. Nevertheless, through much hardship and trouble, they continued. Finally, at the appointed time, their Messiah appeared according to the conditions laid down in their prophetic scriptures. When He came, Herod, an Idumean (a descendant of Esau) was king in the land, and there was no room for David's greater Son. In due time they rejected their Messiah precisely as had been foretold by the prophets. Led on by their priests and chief men they clamored for His death, and disclaimed

Him as their king, saying, "We have no king but Caesar." John 19:15. When Pilate, the Roman governor, sought to free Him whom he recognized as an innocent man, they cried out, "His blood be on us, and on our children." Math 27:25.

For their idolatry, they had been subjected to Babylonian captivity; for their rejection of Christ and choice of Caesar and Barabbas, they were destroyed by Titus and dispersed for almost twenty centuries. The Lord Jesus wept over their coming destruction by the Romans (Luke 19:41). When He gave them the parable of the vineyard and the husbandmen, He told them of His own rejection by them and asked them what the owner of the vineyard would do to those husbandmen; and they replied, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men" (Matt. 21:41). He further said that God would send His armies (the Romans under Titus) and destroy them and burn up their city (Matt. 22:7). He also said that "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24).

This we see that it was by no accident that Titus destroyed Jerusalem and dispersed the Jews. It was a divine judgment that befell them, for the "Scripture cannot be broken." The prophet Isaiah arraigned Israel for their idolatry in chapters 9-48, inclusive, and in the last verse of chapter 48 said, "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked" - the wicked being those who forsook Jehovah for idols. Then in the next chapters their Messiah is mentioned, also their rejection of Him; and this section ends with, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Isa. 57:21. The wicked of this latter verse are those who rejected their Messiah, the Son of God.

Their preservation as a distinct people was not the result of fortuitous circumstances. They, like Cain, had a mark on them that was to keep them from being exterminated. Cain had killed his brother, and they rejected Him who came down in grace as their Brother. (He, the blessed Son of God, came of David's seed according to the flesh [Rom. 1:3].) Cain was to be preserved and bear his punishment, and so were the Jews who cast out their King. A summation of their law was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-40); yet they did not love the Lord Jesus as God, nor their neighbor (which place He had in grace taken). To one enlightened by the Word of God, Jewish preservation is clearly understood and is not, as some call it, "the enigma of Jewish survival."

However, the condition in which they have existed for almost 2000 years is not going to last forever. God has decreed certain limitations on the days of their exile and suffering. The language of faith in the Old Testament, when anticipating their fall, was a cry to God, "How long?" and God's word regarding their dispersion contains an "until." When Isaiah was told to prophecy about Israel's being blinded, the prophet said, "Lord, how long?" God answered, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.... But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return." Isa. 6:11, 13. And the Lord Jesus said, "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). The terminus of their exile and suffering is definitely decreed.

There are many people in Christendom who say that God will not reinstate Israel as His special possession in the land which He gave to their fathers. This is either ignorance or self-will, or both. To reject the thought of Israel's reinvestiture is to reject Scripture. Romans 11 alone should decide the issue; first the Apostle reasons that God has not cast away His people by proving that at that very time there was a remnant saved according to His purposes in grace (v. 5). There never was a

time in this age when there were not Jews saved and brought into the Church of God on earth. At the beginning, all the believers were Jews. But then the Apostle continues to show in the figure of the olive tree how the people of promise had been cut off from the tree symbolizing privilege on earth, but were to be grafted in again. His promises to Abraham were unconditional, although the Jews had subsequently put themselves under the law as a condition on which their blessings were to hang. They lost everything for the time on that basis, for their unfaithfulness, but God will yet fulfill to the letter His irrevocable promises to Abraham.

The Apostle by the Spirit of God says, "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles." Rom. 11:11. They stumbled over their Messiah when He came in lowly grace, but this does not mean that they have been permanently rejected. In the present time, however, their rejection of the Lord Jesus has opened the way to bring the Gentiles into this marvelous grace of God. But the Apostle goes on to speak of the day coming of Israel's "fullness." They are to be blessed and be a blessing. The day of their fullness will bring blessing to the earth. After conclusive divine reasoning on the point of Israel's restoration to His special favor, the Apostle adds, "that blindness in part [not total, for some have always believed and received the Lord Jesus] is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." The present is the time of the fullness of the Gentiles-their being offered the mercy and salvation of God-but they have not continued "in His goodness." Christendom, with all its increased emphasis on religion as a bulwark against communism, is generally rejecting the gospel. They are soon going to lose their present preferred position, and Israel be brought back into it.

For many centuries Palestine was almost totally uninhabited by the descendants of Jacob-the people of the promise and of the Book. In the year 1882, only 25,000 lived there. Toward the end of that century, Zionism became active in promoting the return of the Jews to the land. By 1914, about 100,000 Jews resided there; but their numbers soon began to diminish as they emigrated to other lands. Then, during the first world war, a notable Jew, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, who later became the first president of the new state of Israel, developed acetone, needed to make TNT, for the British. This definitely helped the allies to win the war, and he was offered great honors; but he chose rather to petition for a national home for his people. This in turn brought the Balfour declaration, stating that the British government looked with favor upon Palestine as a land for the Jews. Jewish population then mounted from only 55,000 in 1919 to 600,000 in 1942. And when the auspicious day of May 14, 1948 came, there were only about 650,000 Jews in Palestine; but many seeking entry had been interned on the Island of Cyprus. During these ten years of Israel's sovereignty, well over 1,000,000 Jews from 60 nations have taken up residence in the land of their fathers. So on their independence day this year (1958), there are almost 2,000,000 Jews back in the land. It is a reunion of the land, the people, and the language.

But what should be the Christian's view of this achievement of the seemingly impossible? Are we to rejoice over Israel's being gathered together in Palestine as though this is

the work of God of which He spoke by His prophets? We judge not. While God moves behind the scenes and permits or holds in check the plans and schemes of men, the present revival of the Jewish nation and the great strides of the past decade in their Palestinian-held territory bear no resemblance to God's promises to gather them back to their land. God has said: "Fear not; for I am

with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west:... even every one that is called by My name." Isa. 43:5, 7. "With great mercies will I gather thee... With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD, thy Redeemer." Isa. 54:7, 8. "And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the LORD their God." Zech. 10:6. And the Lord Himself said, "And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds." Matt. 24:31. Very many scriptures might be adduced to prove that it is God Himself who shall do the gathering, and they shall be called by His name. It will not be a return to the land merely, but to God.

What we have been witnessing is preponderantly the work of men of zeal, not that which is to characterize what their Messiah will display on Israel's behalf. They refer to the idea of a coming Messiah, but only as an indefinite thing. One of their leaders, when asked about the coming of the Messiah, said, "We do not know what the coming of the Messiah will be, whether a person or a national revival, but we know that it will not be the Christian Messiah." They speak much more of their accomplishments. Mr. Abba Eban (Israel's ambassador to the United Nations and the United States) is regarded as the "Voice of Israel," in which the great leader says: "The restoration is described by Jewish historians both as a Divine will and as a human duty. The Divine promise decreed that this people should be restored; it was, therefore, its own duty not only to dream but also labor for that redemption." "A dream which had no ostensible prospect of realization was carried to fulfillment against all calculation of material chance."

In one chapter of his book the famous ambassador takes issue with the modern historian, Arnold Toynbee. Toynbee insists that if and when God would restore Israel to their land, He would do it without their help. But Abba Eban says in rebuttal: "It is true that the Hebrew doctrine of history describes the Restoration as a Divine purpose. But it also describes it as a purpose which human effort should strive to accelerate. Indeed, Judaism rejects Dr. Toynbee's persistent division between the Divine Will and human action. He constantly sees these two concepts in terms of antithesis. In Judaism, except for the mystical heresies, it is deemed that if something is willed by God, then it is the duty of man in his material life to strive for its fulfillment." "Toynbee portrays the movement for the restoration of Jewish nationhood as a usurpation of human beings of a destiny which can only be righteously envisaged as the work of the Creator." The basis of Dr. Toynbee's argument is not within the scope of our examination, for he is striking out against the displacement of 750,000 Arabs when Israel took over the land, although by so doing Israel may have sown the seeds of her own destruction. We cite Mr. Eban, however, as an authoritative voice of Israel to show that they consider the present achievement to be a monument to the power of man's will and determination. Truly they have done great things, but the restoration spoken of by God is what He will do. Was their original deliverance from Egypt the result of their prowess, or divine intervention? The coming restoration of Israel will be entirely God's doing. (Our comments on Dr. Toynbee's history should not be construed as any approval of his humanistic approach to Christianity.)

At the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to execute judgment on His enemies, and reign, He will set up His perfect government on earth; and He will give a redeemed and quickened remnant of Israel a new heart; they will be born again- they will be a changed people with His law written in their hearts. The last three chapters of Zechariah, Jer. 31:31-34, Eze. 36:25-38, and other prophecies

make this very clear. Is there one particle of evidence that in their present return to the land they have really returned to their God? True, they have rabbis who exert a strong political influence over the use of Hebrew as a language, and over dietary laws, etc.; but in the main there is nothing for God in the whole affair. They have gone back to a national land, not as to a holy land. It is a return of the people to the land and the language in unbelief. They are trusting in man for the accomplishment of God's purposes.

A Los Angeles Times correspondent reported: "Far from being ultra-religious, the majority of Jews to whom this writer talked in Israel are bitterly resentful of personal restrictions imposed on them in deference to the religious element and regard the orthodox as obstacles in the path, of progress.

"It annoys them, for instance, that the rabbis wage unremitting war against the importation of non-kosher meat.... They object to restrictions on travel on their weekly holiday. They want civil marriage and divorce laws.

"It is true enough that ardently zealous young Zionists are little interested in the rich Biblical associations of their country, or for that matter in any of its ancient glories. They think less of Solomon's temple than of the new row of cement houses rising on a Galilean hillside. Their orientation is wholly toward the future, and the state's furious progress promises to submerge much of the antique charm of what the world regards as the Holy Land.

"Zionism is not, as so many non-Jews believe, a religious movement, though religion has been useful in reinforcing its claims and enlisting international support."

Even Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, saw it as a nationalistic movement, and expressed the aims of Zionism in these words: "The creation of a home secured by public right for those Jews who cannot or will not be assimilated by the country of their adoption." Where in this is their repentance and turning to God in contrition which will be a prerequisite to their being established by God in the land which He gave unto their fathers? It is true that they resisted being assimilated in the nations where they sojourned, and kept a consciousness of their being descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but this is all understood by God's putting a mark on them until they must meet the One whom they rejected. Joseph's brethren were a type of them, both in selling him and in having to meet him in humiliation and confession at a later date.

Speaking naturally, as men, Israel has good reason to boast of its achievements of the first decade. The nation was no sooner born than it was attacked by the surrounding Arab states; and though outnumbered 40 to 1, it not only repulsed the Arabs, but drove them back beyond the early lines of demarcation. Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan joined in the attack for the purpose of eliminating the new state before it could take root. In those days considerable pressure was put on both sides to agree to an armistice, and after various attempts such agreements were completed; but to this day no settled peace has ever been made. During the entire decade, Israel has faced hostile foes, blockades, boycotts, sporadic attacks, and pressures, but with the backing of world Jewry their progress has been steady. It is a modern marvel that a young nation could make such a defense and yet assimilate well over 1,000,00 Jews, and still make progress in the process.

The Israelis have shown great scientific and technological skill, so that in many things they are already self-sufficient and, in some produce and manufactured products, they are now exporters.

We all know that Palestine receives very little rainfall, and that water is a vital necessity for Israel's continued existence and expansion. Through great fortitude and human endeavor they have brought water from the more favored parts of the land to those less favored. They have taken water from the Yarkon River through massive pipelines down to the Negev, and that area long known as a desert is producing bumper crops. They have drilled wells and have sought to turn barren land into a fertile country. To a large degree, they are succeeding. And so writers, both secular and religious, are proclaiming that this is the accomplishment of God's promises, as:

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly.... Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams 'in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water" (Isa. 35:1-7). "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth.... I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." Isa. 43:19.

The crucial point is not whether Israel has done great things, but whether they are the works of their hands or the things God has promised to do. Would it be anything new for irrigation to take water to a desert area? Of course not! But God has said He will do a new thing. Does He need the work of men's hands to accomplish His design? When He promised Israel the land of Canaan long ago, He described it as very different from the land of Egypt with which they were acquainted-"For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot [that is, by irrigation].... But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the LORD thy God careth for... from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." Deut. 11:10-12. Did God need man's foot to water the land in that day? No. It is quite evident that the Negev Desert supported numerous people and flocks and herds in the days of Abraham. By the prophet Isaiah, God foretold what would happen to them and to their land for their sin. He said He would break down the wall that He had put around them for their protection. He said, moreover, "I will lay it [His vineyard] waste; it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." Isa. 5:6.

God commended the land to them in the beginning as one which had sufficient rainfall, then told them that He would withhold rain from it for their disobedience, and then promised to send an abundance of rain in a future day. He needs neither man's efforts nor inventions to supplement what He deigns to do.

Israel: the Land and the People

Even the tremendous yields that the Israelis boast of on their newly reclaimed land are nothing to be compared with that which God has promised them. Think of verses like these: "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth [perhaps 'land,' meaning Canaan] upon the top of the mountains; and the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon" (where the majestic "cedars of Lebanon" grew). Psalm 72:16. But this is predicated upon: "Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him.... Daily shall He be praised.... His name shall endure forever... and men shall be blessed in Him.... Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things." And in Amos 9:13 we read "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the

reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed." In other words, the crop will be so abundant that while they are still reaping last year's crop the man plowing for this year's planting will catch up with the reapers. Is there anything to compare with that on the earth today? Israel or elsewhere?

Some Christians have failed to notice that all the future blessing promised for that land is dependent upon Israel's restoration to God. Isaiah 35, from which we have quoted about the abundant water, verdure, and fruitfulness, also says, "They shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God." "Your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you." "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it." "The redeemed shall walk there." Verses may be multiplied from other portions which speak of Israel's blessing in that day. The most careless reader or the most superficial observer should not fail to see that while Israel may now boast of its great achievements, these are not the fulfillment of God's promises to that people and that land. There is much trouble for them to pass through before that time of blessing comes. We should have compassion on them, for they are "beloved for the fathers' sakes," but let us keep a clear perspective.

While the moment approaches for the completion of the "times of the Gentiles," it has not yet come. These times began with the overthrow of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, when God withdrew from the active government of the earth through Israel. After that, God is not called the God of the "earth," but of "heaven" (see Josh. 3:11, 13 and Dan. 2:18, 28; 4:37); and Israel is called "Lo-ammi," or "not My people." This period of Gentile supremacy will not end until the Lord Jesus comes "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel." 2 Thess. 1:8. He will then smash the Gentiles and return a concerted remnant of Israel to their own land in peace and security.

Today, as Israel looks back on its progress, it may well ponder the years ahead. The whole Middle East stirs with strong anti-Israel sentiment, while Russia promotes Arab hostility to the Jews in the hope of controlling the Middle East to the discomfiture of the West. But with the clouds of uncertainty hanging over the Jews, is their hope and trust in God who is over all? Are they counting upon Him who so marvelously helped them in days of old? The following quotations may well indicate the prevalent Jewish feeling: "The first decade has established a home for almost two million Jews throughout the world.... There are still many danger points ahead, including the threat of Soviet economic and even military antagonism." This was taken from the Los Angeles B'nai B'rith which then continues, and quotes Premier David Ben-Gurion from the New York Times: " 'To those Jews in free and prosperous countries we present a new type of Jew. A Jew who depends upon himself for his security.' " And David Horowitz in the B'nai B'rith says: "It [the consolidations and mergers of Arab states] may still hold many surprises for the world in which Israel, always on guard, must work out its own destiny." And ex-president Truman is quoted as saying, "The Israelites will take care of themselves as they always did in historic times." (Emphasis ours.)

How different is this self-confident spirit from that which is expressed in the Psalms as the language of a faithful Jewish remnant in days of tribulation still to come. In many psalms are cries which indicate a dependence on God and a calling on Him for refuge and strength in their trouble. The middle verse of the Bible is found in the 118th Psalm: "It is better to trust in the LORD than to

put confidence in man." v. 8. The poor Jews will yet have to learn this.

Although the present restoration of almost two million Jews to Palestine is not what Scripture speaks of as God's calling them back, nor is their amazing achievement of providing water by irrigation what God meant when He spoke of giving them an abundance of water, yet it is evident from Scripture that when the Lord Jesus comes to put down His enemies and reign triumphantly there will be a nation of Jews in their land, with a sovereign ruler. So it is necessary that they be back there before the end of this age. And doubtless God has allowed all that has taken place there in His all wise and overruling hand. They have gone back in unbelief, not to receive their true Messiah, but to receive a false. Christ- the antichrist. The Jews are going back there with a reviving of intense nationalism, rather than with repentance toward God, at His call. They are going back for the worse and not the better, for the steps to acceptance of "the antichrist" are being trodden with accelerated pace.

When the Jews rejected their Messiah at His coming, He said to them: "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." John 5:43. He also said: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth.... The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep." John 10:11-13. So they are to have a ruler who does not come in God's name, but who will be a false shepherd who will leave them and flee to save himself in their hour of deep trouble. This is also borne out in Zechariah 11, where prophetically the Lord Jesus is commissioned of God as the true shepherd of the sheep, and then rejected by them; then God says: "For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd [or shepherd of nothingness] that leaveth the flock!" vv. 16, 17. This man that is coming will be the very antithesis of the Shepherd who came to them, who was also the owner of the sheep, and who "gave His life for the sheep."

This false shepherd whom the Jews will receive is also called "the king"; he may be known by some other title, but the "king" of Scripture designates him as the ruler. In Isaiah 30, the future enemy of the Jews on the north of Israel is referred to as "the Assyrian," for he shall have some of the same features of that former enemy of Israel, and be somewhat similarly located. So the last verse of the chapter says, "For Tophet [evidently referring to the lake of fire] is ordained of old [that is, for the Assyrian of the future]"; then God adds, "yea, for the king [also] it is prepared"; that is, for the antichrist. This is borne out by a word in Rev. 19:20, where this same "king" is referred to as "the false prophet" who will be taken by the Lord when He returns and (with the head of the revived Roman Empire- the beast of the same verse) cast alive into the lake of fire without trial for his rebellion against Christ when He comes to reign. He is also called "the king" in Isa. 57:9: "And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes,... and didst debase thyself even unto hell." The returned Jews will render homage to that man who assumes to take the place of the Messiah, but they will reap the terrible consequences of their doings.

The coming head of the Jewish people in Israel is also called "the king" in Dan. 11:36: "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself [what a contrast to the true Shepherd

'who humbled Himself'], and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers.... But in his estate shall he honor the god of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things." vv. 36-38. This man will put himself in league with the corrupt and violent head of the revived Roman Empire in order to secure his support against the Arab world. This Roman head will be actually energized by Satan, and be his tool; he is called "the beast" in Rev. 11:7; 13:1-10; 14:9, 11; 17:3-17; 19:19, 20. How solemn to think that all this auspicious return of two million Jews to their homeland is only a forerunner of their acceptance of an ungodly, profane, and defiant false prophet and king who will be in league with the "beast" of the Roman Empire, and with Satan himself. This apostate Jew is also called a "beast" in Revelation 13; but he is the second "beast" in the chapter.

Because they rejected their Messiah, the true Shepherd of Israel, the Jews are going to receive and worship this antichrist, who will be in league with and will worship the Roman beast, called in Daniel 11 the "god of forces"-the head of all the vast materiel of war of the Western world, and who will not hesitate to use the most lethal weapons at his disposal. The Psalms often speak of a deceitful and a violent man- the former is the false prophet in Israel, and the latter is the Roman beast. These twin characters marked the world since the fall, and corruption and violence were rampant before the flood. They will reach their peak in these two beasts of the future.

We also learn that at least seven years before the true Messiah comes back to "make His enemies His footstool," the Roman beast will make a solemn covenant with the Jewish antichrist to give the Jews their land and protect them for seven years. This can be found in the last verse of Daniel 9. That verse explained would read something like this: And he [the Roman beast] shall confirm a covenant [not the new covenant which God will make later with Israel] with the many [or the majority of the Jews in Israel under the leadership of "their king"] for one heptad [or a period of seven years]; and in the middle of those seven years he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease [this indicates that the Jews will have a temple and have re-established their religious service under the beast's protection] and for the overspreading of abominations [or for the replacement of an image of the beast in the holy place of the temple (see Matt. 24:15)] there shall be a desolator, even unto the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (The covenant will be broken after three and one half years to the extent that the Roman beast will suddenly stop the re-established Jewish religious ritual, and seek to blot out the mention of God.)

Perhaps an all-out Arab attack on the nation of Israel, aggravated by Russian assistance, may help to force the formation of the revived Roman Empire and bring its future violent head to the rescue of Israel. If this be so, there would be a serious setback for Israel not too far in the future; then with the Roman Empire's backing they would feel secure for seven years; but at the end of those seven years, the Arab world-called in Daniel 11 "the king of the north" and alternately with "the king of the south" (Egypt)-will wreak untold havoc against the Jews in Palestine (Dan. 11:40). Isa. 28:14-20 describes the awful time of the incursion of the Arab world against Israel, seemingly secure with their contract (or covenant) for protection by the Roman Empire, only to find it fail. So terrible will be the destruction of life in Israel at the end of those seven years that, "It shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third

part shall be left therein." We might well weep over that people, not merely for what they have endured for those fateful words, "His blood be on us, and on our children," but for the extremity of trouble that is still in store for them. And if the loss of life and destruction of property will be so great, it will easily be seen that a new restitution of land and people will be needed, and it will be God's work. When He cleanses and brings "the third part through the fire," and refines them as silver and tries them as gold in the crucible of affliction, then it will be true, "They shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people [reversing Lo-ammi]: and they shall say, The LORD is my God." (Zech. 13:8, 9.)

When the Son of man returns in the clouds of heaven with "power and great glory," He will come to a largely devastated land of Israel. A godly remnant of the Jews who refused to acknowledge the antichrist or worship the beast or his image will have fled from the land according to the Lord's instruction to the Jewish disciples: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation [the image of the beast], spoken of by Daniel the prophet [Dan. 12:11], stand in the holy place [that is, in the temple],... then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Matt. 24:15. These faithful Jews are also spoken of in Rev. 12:6 as "the woman" who fled into the wilderness for 1,260 days, or three and one half years -the period of the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7), "the great tribulation." They will then return and welcome Him for whom they were waiting.

The Lord as the Son of man will then "send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect [the dispersed of Israel - not of the two tribes only] from the four winds." None but truly "born again" Israelites will enter into the land in that day, for He will meet them in the wilderness and cause them to "pass under the rod," and bring them into "the bond of the covenant." He will further purge out the rebels from among the returning Israelites, "and them that transgress against Me." (See Eze. 20:34-38; 36:25-30.)

Just who and where the ten tribes are is still a matter that is not clear, and over which many have speculated. We do know that when the remnant returned from Babylonish captivity in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, they were almost entirely of Judah and Benjamin, with the Levites. The ten tribes were taken captive by the Assyrians at an early date, and as far as we know never returned. Stragglers were no doubt among the Jews who returned, for Anna the prophetess was of the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36). The ten tribes may have lost any characteristic feature and the consciousness of being of Israel, but the Lord knows who and where they are, and will bring them back. It was not necessary that they have a mark on them, as the Jews did, for they were not guilty of the crucifixion of their Messiah. That all twelve tribes will have their places in the millennial kingdom of Christ is abundantly clear from Ezekiel 48, where the future alignment is given. Isa. 11:12, 13 speaks of "the outcasts of Israel" and "the dispersed of Judah" being brought back, while the envy between the ten and the two tribes will cease. And from Ezekiel 37 we learn that God will bring both groups of tribes back into their land, and they will be "one nation," and they will never be "divided into two kingdoms any more at all" (vv. 18-22).

So when we see Israel back in their land in unbelief, looking for some sort of Messiah, we understand that they are readying themselves for the false Messiah and all the scourging that will follow his reception. The moment is fast approaching when all these things will be fulfilled. As another once said: "If you want to know what time it is, just look at Israel and see where they are, or look at the nations and see if they are getting together for the mergers of both East and West;

then look at the Church and see the ruin." Today the hands of the prophetic clock are almost at the appointed hour. The coming of the Lord for the Church is not a part of the prophecy concerning the earth, but we must be off the scene before the great end developments take place.

Israel as a nation is often spoken of as a "fig tree." And the Lord said, when addressing the disciples as a figure of a godly remnant of the Jews which will be here after the Church is gone: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Matt. 24:32, 33. If the budding of the "fig tree" is to be a sure sign of the coming of the Messiah to reign, to be understood by the godly remnant at that day, shall we close our eyes to the budding of the fig tree now? And in Luke 21:39, the Spirit of God speaks of the fig tree, and then adds, "and all the trees"; that is, the other nations will likewise show signs of coming events. It is not only that Israel is already back in their land, with natural fortitude doing amazing things, but they are morally and spiritually ready for the advent of the antichrist-any leader who will promise great things may be the man of the hour to them.

To point up the ease with which the Jews could accept a man as their Messiah today, we need only call attention to the feeling of some of their number toward Premier David Ben-Gurion. The Los Angeles Times correspondent reports that "Ben-Gurion... is sometimes jokingly called King David II." The article also says, "A lot of the Yemenites... actually believe that Ben-Gurion is the Messiah.... Political opponents of the Prime Minister charge that he does not discourage this Messiah theory, though not notably orthodox himself." Truly he has done great things for his young state, but at his age he is not likely to be the man of whom Scripture speaks, although the man to come may be on the scene today.

As a further indication of the time at which we have arrived, we should remember that the nations of the Middle East are moving and stirring, the nations of the West have been experimenting with consolidations, while Russia and her satellites are also readying themselves for their part, which will be enacted after Christ has established His kingdom in righteousness (see Ezek. 38 and 39). He will not put down all enemies at once. Surely the signs that will be recognizable by a godly remnant of the Jews who will, at the risk of death, refuse to do obeisance either to the Jewish antichrist or to the Roman beast or his image (Rev. 13:14, 15), are already becoming discernible. If the remnant of the Jews are to then look up in anticipation of their redemption by power, then the coming of the Lord for His saints cannot be far removed. Let us look up and rejoice, for the coming of Jesus draws nigh.

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon." Hos. 14:4-6.

Jesus Himself

"Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them" (Luke 24:15).

Jesus Himself! Nothing less is offered to us. If we want Him, we can have Him. All that He is, and all that He has, may be ours. Our Christianity, to be all that it ought to be and may be, must be just this-Himself.

The true and perfect knowledge of Him really settles every difficulty. To know Him is to know God, and to know God is to end our doubts. Christ had none, because this knowledge was His; and it may be ours.

"In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power." Col. 2:9, 10.

John 6:56-58

It is said of a certain little insect that it always exhibits the color of the leaf on which it feeds. So it is exactly with the Christian. It is very easy to tell what we are feeding upon.

Nature to the mind attentive, teaches oft a hidden truth, Even by a tiny insect, speaking to our hearts reproof. Many a different plant will furnish daily food the insect needs,

But it always takes the color from the leaf whereon it feeds.

Christians from the bread of heaven oftentimes turn to earthly fare,

But a tell-tale change of color to their shame they always bear.

If on Christ the Lamb we're feeding, we'll present a heavenly blue,

But the taste of earthly follies changeth to another hue.

Life and Times of Josiah: Part 5

2 Chronicles 34 and 35

We feel it to be of real moment to insist upon this principle; namely, that the only ground on which we can believe any doctrine is its being revealed in the divine Word. It is thus we believe all the great truths of Christianity. We know nothing and can believe nothing of what is spiritual, heavenly, or divine, save as we find it revealed in the Word of God. How do I know I am a sinner? Because Scripture has declared that "all have sinned." No doubt, I feel that I am a sinner; but I do not believe because I feel, but I feel because I believe; and I believe because God has spoken. Faith rests upon divine revelation, not on human feelings or human reasonings. "It is written," is quite sufficient for faith. It can do with nothing less, but it asks nothing more. God speaks, faith believes. Yes, it believes simply because God speaks. It does not judge God's Word by outward appearances, but it judges outward appearances by the Word of God.

Thus it is in reference to all the cardinal truths of the Christian religion. Such is the trinity; the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; His atonement; His priesthood; His advent; the doctrine of original sin; of justification; judgment to come; eternal punishment. We believe these grand and solemn truths, not on the ground of feeling, of reason, or of outward appearances, but simply on the ground of divine revelation.

Hence, then, if it be asked, On what ground do we believe in the doctrine of the unity of the body? we reply, Upon the selfsame ground that we believe the doctrine of the trinity, the deity of Christ, and the atonement. We believe it because it is revealed in sundry places in the New Testament. Thus, for example, in 1 Corinthians 12 we read: "For as the body is one, and hath many members and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." vv. 12, 13. Again, "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body.... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." vv. 24, 27.

Here we have distinctly laid down the perfect and indissoluble unity of the Church of God, the body of Christ, on precisely the same authority as any other truth commonly received among us, so that there is just as much ground for calling in question the deity of Christ as there is for calling in question the unity of the body. The one is as true as the other; and both are divinely true because divinely revealed. We believe that Jesus Christ is God over all, blessed forever, because Scripture tells us so; we believe that there is one body because Scripture tells us so. We do not reason in the one case, but believe and bow; nor should we reason in the other case, but believe and bow. "There is one body, and one Spirit."

Now, we must bear in mind that this truth of the unity of the body is not a mere abstraction—a barren speculation—a powerless dogma. It is a practical, formative, influential truth, in the light of which we are called to walk, to judge ourselves and all around us. It was so with the faithful in

Israel of old. The unity of the nation was a real thing to them, and not a mere theory to be taken up or laid down at pleasure. It was a great formative, powerful truth. The nation was one in God's thoughts; and if it was not manifestly so, the faithful had only to take the place of self-judgment, brokenness of spirit, and contrition of heart. Witness the case of Hezekiah, Josiah, Daniel, Nehemiah, and Ezra. It never once occurred to these faithful men that they were to give up the truth of Israel's unity because Israel had failed to maintain it. They did not measure the truth of God by the actings of men; but they judged the actings of men, and themselves likewise, by the truth of God. This was the only true way to act. If the manifested unity of Israel was marred through man's sin and folly, the truehearted members of the congregation owned and mourned over the sin, confessed it as their own, and looked to God. Nor was this all. They felt their responsibility to act on the truth of God, whatever might be the outward condition of things.

This, we repeat, was the meaning of Elijah's altar of twelve stones, erected in the face of Jezebel's eight hundred false prophets, and despite the division of the nation in man's view (1 Kings 18). This too was the meaning of Hezekiah's letters sent to "all Israel" to invite them to "come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel" (2 Chron. 30:1). Nothing can be more touching than the spirit and style of these letters: "Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and He will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see. Now, be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into His sanctuary, which He hath sanctified forever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you. For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away His face from you." vv. 6-9.

What was all this but simple faith acting on the grand, eternal, immutable truth of the unity of the nation of Israel? The nation was one in the purpose of God, and Hezekiah looked at it from the divine standpoint, as faith ever does, and he acted accordingly. "So the posts passed from city to city, through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them." v. 10. This was very sad, but it is only what we must expect. The actings of faith are sure to call forth the scorn and contempt of those who are not up to the standard of God's thoughts. Doubtless, these men of Ephraim and Manasseh regarded Hezekiah's message as a piece of presumption, or wild extravagance. Perhaps the great truth that was acting with such power on his soul, forming his character, and ruling his conduct, was, in their judgment, a myth, or, at best, a valueless theory—a thing of the past—an institution of bygone ages, having no present application. But faith is never moved by the thoughts of men, and therefore Hezekiah went on with his work, and God owned and blessed him. He could afford to be laughed at and turned into ridicule, while he beheld divers of Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun humbling themselves and coming to Jerusalem. Hezekiah and all who thus humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God, reaped a rich harvest of blessing, while the mockers and scorners were left in the barrenness and deadness with which their own unbelief had surrounded them.

And let the reader mark the force of those words of Hezekiah "If ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive." Does not

this approach very near to that precious truth of the New Testament times, that we are members one of another, and that the conduct of one member affects all the rest? Unbelief might raise the question as to how this could possibly be-as to how the actings of one could possibly affect others far away-yet so it was in Israel, and so it is now in the Church of God. Witness the case of Achan, in Joshua 7. There, one man sinned; and, so far as the narrative informs us, the whole congregation was ignorant of the fact; and yet we read that "the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing" (Josh. 7:1). And again, "Israel hath sinned" (v. 11). How could this be? Simply because the nation was one, and God dwelt among them. This, plainly, was the ground of a double responsibility; namely, a responsibility to God, and a responsibility to the whole assembly, and to each member in particular. It was utterly impossible for any one member of the congregation to shake off this high and holy responsibility. A person living at Dan might feel disposed to question how his conduct could affect a man living at Beersheba; yet such was the fact, and the ground of this fact lay in the eternal truth of Israel's indissoluble unity, and Jehovah's dwelling in the midst of His redeemed assembly. (See Exod. 15:2, and the many passages which speak of God's dwelling in the midst of Israel.)

We do not attempt even to quote the numerous scriptures which speak of God's presence in the congregation of Israel- His dwelling in their midst. But we would call the attention of the reader to the all-important fact that those scriptures begin with Exodus 15. It was when Israel stood as a fully redeemed people, on Canaan's side of the Red Sea, that they were able to say, "The LORD is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation." Redemption formed the ground of God's dwelling among His people, and His presence in their midst secured their perfect unity. Hence no one member of the congregation could view himself as an isolated independent atom. Each one was called to view himself as part of a whole, and to view his conduct in reference to all those who, like himself, formed part of that whole.

Now, reason could never grasp a truth like this. It lay entirely beyond the ken of the most powerful human intellect. Faith alone could receive it and act upon it; and it is of the deepest interest to see that the faithful in Israel ever recognized it, and acted upon it. Why did Hezekiah send letters to "all Israel"? Why did he expose himself to scorn and ridicule in so doing? Why did he command that "the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel"? Why did Josiah carry his reformatory operations into all "the countries that pertained to the children of Israel"? Because those men of God recognized the divine truth of Israel's unity; and they did not think of throwing this grand reality overboard because so few saw it, or sought to carry it out. "The people shall dwell alone"; and "I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel." These imperishable truths shine, like most precious gems of heavenly luster, all along the page of Old Testament scripture; and we invariably find that, just in proportion as anyone was living near to God-near to the living and ever gushing fountain of light, and life, and love-just in proportion as he entered into the thoughts, purposes, sympathies, and counsels of the God of Israel-did he apprehend and seek to carry out that which God had declared to be true of His people, though His people had proved so untrue to Him.

And now, Christian reader, we would ask you a very plain and pointed question, which is this: Do you not recognize in the unity of the Jewish nation the foreshadowing of a higher unity now existing in that one body of which Christ is the Head? We trust you do. We fondly hope that your

whole moral being bows down with reverent submission to the mighty truth, "There is one body." But then we can well imagine that you feel yourself not a little perplexed and confounded, when you cast your eye around you, through the length and breadth of the professing church, in search of any positive expression of this unity. You see Christians scattered and divided-you see innumerable sects and parties-and what, perhaps, puzzles you most of all, you see those who profess to believe and act upon the truth of the unity of the body, divided among themselves, and presenting anything but a spectacle of unity and harmony. All this, we confess, is very perplexing to one who looks at it from a merely human standpoint. We are not the least surprised at people being stumbled and hindered by these things. Still the foundation of God stands sure. His truth is perfectly indestructible; and if we gaze with admiration upon the faithful worthies of a bygone age who believed and confessed the unity of Israel, when there was not a trace of that unity visible to mortal eyes, why should we not heartily believe and diligently carry out the higher unity of the one body?

"There is one body, and one Spirit," and herein lies the basis of our responsibility to one another and to God. Are we to surrender this all-important truth because Christians are scattered and divided? God forbid. It is as real and as precious as ever, and it ought to be as formative and as influential. We are bound to act upon the truth of God, irrespective of consequences, and utterly regardless of outward appearances. It is not for us to say, as so many do, "The case is hopeless; everything has gone to pieces; it is impossible to carry out the truth of God amid the heaps of rubbish which lie around us; the unity of the body was a thing of the past, it may be a thing of the future, but it cannot be a thing of the present. The idea of unity must be abandoned as thoroughly utopian; it cannot be maintained in the face of Christendom's numberless sects and parties. Nothing remains now but for each one to look to the Lord for himself, and to do the best he can, in his own individual sphere, and according to the dictates of his own conscience and judgment."

Such is, in substance, the language of hundreds of the true people of God; and, as is their language, so is their practical career. But we must speak plainly, and we have no hesitation in saying that this language savors of sheer unbelief in that great cardinal verity of the unity of the body; and, moreover, that we have just as much warrant for rejecting the precious doctrine of Christ's deity, of His perfect humanity, or of His vicarious sacrifice, as we have for rejecting the truth of the perfect unity of His body, inasmuch as this latter rests upon precisely the same foundation as the former; namely, the eternal truth of God-the absolute statement of Holy Scripture.

What right have we to set aside any one truth of divine revelation? What authority have we to single out any special truth from the Word of God, and say that it no longer applies? We are bound to receive all truth, and to submit our souls to its authority. It is a dangerous thing to admit for a moment the idea that any one truth of God is to be set aside, on the plea that it cannot be carried out. It is sufficient for us that it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures; we have only to believe and to obey. Does Scripture declare that there is "one body"? Assuredly it does. This is enough. We are responsible to maintain this truth, cost what it may; we can accept nothing else, nothing less, nothing different. We are bound, by the allegiance which we owe to Christ the Head, to testify, practically, against everything that militates against the truth of the indissoluble unity of the Church of God, and to seek earnestly and constantly a faithful expression of that unity.

True, we shall have to contend with false unity on the one hand, and false individuality on the other; but we have only to hold fast and confess the truth of God, looking to Him in humility of mind and earnest purpose of heart, and He will sustain us in the path, let the difficulties be what they may. No doubt there are difficulties in the way-grave difficulties- such as we in our own strength cannot cope with. The very fact that we are told to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" is sufficient to prove that there are difficulties in the way; but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is amply sufficient for all the demands that may be made upon us in seeking to act upon this most precious truth.

In contemplating the present condition of the professing church, we may discern two very different classes. In the first place, there are those who are seeking unity on false grounds. And second, those who are seeking it on the ground laid down in the New Testament. This latter is distinctly a spiritual, living, divine unity, and stands out in vivid contrast with all the forms of unity which man has attempted, whether it be national, ecclesiastical, ceremonial, or doctrinal. The Church of God is not a nation, not an ecclesiastical or political system. It is a body united to its divine head in heaven, by the presence of the Holy Ghost. "There is one body, and one Spirit." This remains unalterably true. It holds good now just as much as when the inspired Apostle penned Ephesians 4. Hence anything that tends to interfere with or mar this truth must be wrong, and we are bound to stand apart from it and testify against it. To seek to unite Christians on any other ground than the unity of the body, is manifestly opposed to the revealed mind of God. It may seem very attractive, very desirable, very reasonable, right, and expedient; but it is contrary to God, and this should be enough for us. God's Word speaks only of the unity of the body, and the unity of the Spirit. It recognizes no other unity, neither should we.

The Church of God is one, though consisting of many members. It is not local or geographical; it is corporate. All the members have a double responsibility; they are responsible to the Head, and they are responsible to one another. It is utterly impossible to ignore this responsibility. Men may seek to shirk it; they may deny it; they may assert their individual rights, and act according to their own reason, judgment, or will; but they cannot get rid of the responsibility founded upon the fact of the one compact body. They have to do with the Head in heaven, and with the members on earth. They stand in this double relationship-they were incorporated there into by the Holy Ghost, and to deny it is to deny their very spiritual existence. It is founded in life, formed by the Spirit, and taught and maintained in the Holy Scriptures. There is no such thing as independency. Christians cannot view themselves as mere individuals-as isolated atoms. "We are members one of another." This is as true as that "we are justified by faith." No doubt there is a sense in which we are individual; we are individual in our repentance; individual in our faith; individual in our justification; individual in our walk with God and in our service to Christ; individual in our rewards for service, for each one shall get a white stone and a new name engraved thereon, known only to himself. All this is quite true; but it in nowise touches the other grand practical truth of our union with the Head above, and with each and all of the members below.

And we would here call the reader's attention to two very distinct lines of truth flowing out of two distinct titles of our blessed Lord; namely, Headship and Lordship. He is the Head of His body the Church; and He is Lord of all, Lord of each. Now, when we think of Christ as Lord, we are reminded of our individual responsibility to Him, in the wide range of service to which He, in His sovereignty, has graciously called us. Our reference must be to Him in all things. All our actings,

all our movements, all our arrangements, must be placed under the commanding influence of that weighty sentence (often, alas! lightly spoken and penned), "If the Lord will." And, moreover, no one has any right to thrust himself in between the conscience of a servant and the commandment of his Lord. All this is divinely true, and of the very highest importance. The Lordship of Christ is a truth the value of which cannot possibly be overestimated.

But we must bear in mind that Christ is Head as well as Lord. He is Head of a body, as well as Lord of individuals. These things must not be confounded. We are not to hold the truth of Christ's Lordship in such a way as to interfere with the truth of His Headship. If we merely think of Christ as Lord, and ourselves as individuals responsible to Him, then we shall ignore His Headship, and lose sight of our responsibility to every member of that body of which He is Head. We must jealously watch against this. We cannot look at ourselves as isolated independent atoms; if we think of Christ as Head, then we must think of all His members, and this opens up a wide range of practical truth.

We have holy duties to discharge to our fellow members, as well as to our Lord and Master; and we may rest assured that no one walking in communion with Christ can ever lose sight of the grand fact of his relationship to every member of His body. Such a one will ever remember that his walk and ways exert an influence upon Christians living at the other side of the globe. This is a wondrous mystery, but it is divinely true. If "one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). You cannot reduce the body of Christ to a matter of locality; the body is one, and we are called to maintain this, practically, in every possible way, and to bear a decided testimony against everything which tends to hinder the expression of the perfect unity of the body, whether it be false unity, or false individuality. The enemy is seeking to associate Christians on a false ground, and gather them round a false center; or, if he cannot do this, he will send them adrift upon the wide and tumultuous ocean of a desultory individualism. We are thoroughly persuaded, before God, that the only safeguard against both these false and dangerous extremes is divinely wrought faith in the grand foundation truth of the unity of the body of Christ.

Life and Times of Josiah: Part 6

2 Chronicles 34 and 35

It may here be proper to inquire what is the suited attitude of the Christian in view of the grand foundation truth of the unity of the body. That it is a truth distinctly laid down in the New Testament cannot possibly be questioned. If any reader of these pages be not fully established in the knowledge and hearty belief of this truth, let him prayerfully study 1 Corinthians 12 and 14; Ephesians 2 and 4; Colossians 2 and 3. He will find the doctrine referred to in a practical way in the opening of Romans 12, though it is not the design of the Holy Ghost, in that magnificent epistle, to give us a full unfolding of the truth respecting the Church. What we have to look for there is rather the establishment of the soul's relationship with God through the death and resurrection of Christ. We might pass through the first 11 chapters of Romans and not know that there is such a thing as the Church of God, the body of Christ; and, when we reach chapter 12, the doctrine of one body is assumed, but not dwelt upon.

There is, then, "one body" actually existing on this earth, formed by the "one Spirit," and united to the living Head in heaven. This truth cannot be gainsaid. Some may not see it; some may find it very hard to receive it, in view of the present condition of things; but, nevertheless, it remains a divinely established truth that "there is one body," and the question is, How are we individually affected by this truth? It is as impossible to shake off the responsibility involved therein as it is to set aside the truth itself. If there is a body of which we are members, then do we, in very truth, stand in a holy relationship to every member of that body on earth, as well as to the Head in heaven; and this relationship, like every other, has its characteristic affections, privileges, and responsibilities.

And, be it remembered, we are not speaking now of the question of association with any special company of Christians, but of the whole body of Christ upon earth. No doubt, each company of Christians, wherever assembled, should be but the local expression of the whole body. It should be so gathered and so ordered, on the authority of the Word, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, as that all Christ's members who are walking in truth and holiness might happily find their place there. If an assembly be not thus gathered and thus ordered, it is not on the ground of the unity of the body at all. If there be anything, no matter what, in order, discipline, doctrine, or practice, which would prove a barrier to the presence of any of Christ's members, whose faith and practice are according to the Word of God, then is the unity of the body practically denied.

We are solemnly responsible to own the truth of the unity of the body. We should so meet that all the members of Christ's body might, simply as such, sit down with us and exercise whatever gift the Head of the Church has bestowed upon them. The body is one. Its members are scattered over the whole earth. Distance is nothing; locality, nothing. It may be New Zealand, London, Paris, or Edinburgh; it matters not. A member of the body in one place is a member of the body everywhere; for there is but "one body, and one Spirit." It is the Spirit who forms the body and links the members with the Head and with one another. Hence, a Christian coming from New Zealand

to London ought to expect to find an assembly so gathered as to be a faithful expression of the unity of the body, to which he might attach himself; and, furthermore, any such Christian ought to find his place in the bosom of that assembly, provided always that there be nothing in doctrine or walk to forbid his hearty reception.

Such is the divine order, as laid down in 1 Cor. 12 and 14; Ephesians 2 and 4; and assumed in Romans 12. Indeed we cannot study the New Testament and not see this blessed truth. We find, in various cities and towns, saints gathered by the Holy Ghost in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; as, for example, at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and Thessalonica. These were not independent, isolated, fragmentary assemblies, but parts of the one body, so that a member of the Church in one place was a member of the Church everywhere. Doubtless, each assembly as guided by the one Spirit, and under the one Lord, acted in all local matters, such as receiving to communion, or putting away any wicked person from their midst, meeting the wants of the poor, and such like; but we may be quite assured that the act of the assembly at Corinth would be recognized by all other assemblies, so that if anyone was separated from communion there, he would, if known, be refused in all other places; otherwise it would be a plain denial of the unity of the body.

We have no reason to suppose that the assembly at Corinth communicated or conferred with any other assembly previous to the putting away of "the wicked person" in chapter 5; but we are bound to believe that that act would be duly recognized and sanctioned by every assembly under the sun, and that any assembly knowingly receiving the excommunicated man would have cast a slur upon the assembly at Corinth, and practically denied the unity of the body.

This we believe to be the plain teaching of the New Testament scriptures - this the doctrine which any simple, truehearted student of these scriptures would gather up. That the Church has failed to carry out this precious truth is, alas! alas! painfully true; and that we are all participators in this failure is equally true. The thought of this should humble us deeply before God. Not one can throw a stone at another, for we are all verily guilty in this matter. Let not the reader suppose for a single moment that our object in these pages is to set up anything like high ecclesiastical pretensions, or to afford countenance to hollow assumption, in the face of manifest sin and failure. God forbid! we say with our very heart of hearts. We believe that there is a most urgent call upon all God's people to humble themselves in the very dust on account of our sad departure from the truth so plainly laid down in the Word of God.

Thus it was with the pious and devoted King Josiah, whose life and times have suggested this entire line of thought. He found the book of the law, and discovered in its sacred pages an order of things wholly different from what he saw around him. How did he act? Did he content himself by saying, "The case is hopeless; the nation is too far gone; ruin has set in, and it is utterly vain to think of aiming at the divine standard; we must only let things stand, and do the best we can? No, reader, such was not Josiah's language or mode of action; but he humbled himself before God, and called upon others to do the same. And not only so, but he sought to carry out the truth of God. He aimed at the very loftiest standard, and the consequence was that, "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."

Such was the result of faithful reference and adherence to the Word of God, and thus it will ever be, for "He [God] is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). Look at the actings of the remnant that returned from Babylon in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. What did they do? They set up the altar of God, they built the temple, and repaired the walls of Jerusalem. In other words, they occupied themselves with the true worship of the God of Israel, and with the grand center or gathering point of His people. This was right. It is what faith always does, regardless of circumstances. If the remnant had looked at circumstances, they could not have acted. They were a poor contemptible handful of people, under the dominion of the uncircumcised Gentiles. They were surrounded by active enemies on all sides, who, instigated by the enemy of God, of His city, of His people, left nothing undone to hinder them in their blessed work. These enemies ridiculed them, and said, "What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"

Nor was this all; not only had they to contend with powerful foes without, there was also internal weakness; for "Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall." (Neh. 4.) All this was very depressing. It was very different from the brilliant and palmy days of Solomon. His burden bearers were many and strong, and there was no rubbish covering the great stones and costly with which he built the house of God, nor any contemptuous foe to sneer at his work. And yet, for all that, there were features attaching to the work of Ezra and Nehemiah which are not to be found in the days of Solomon. Their very feebleness; the piles of rubbish which lay before them; the proud and insulting enemies who surrounded them - all these things conspired to add a peculiar halo of glory to their work. They built and prospered, and God was glorified; and He declared in their ears these cheering words, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts." Hag. 2:9.

It is of importance in connection with the subject that has been engaging our attention, that the reader should carefully study the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah. They are full of most blessed instruction, comfort, and encouragement in a day like the present. Many, nowadays, it may be, are disposed to smile at the bare mention of such a subject as the unity of the body. But let them ask themselves, Is it the smile of calm confidence, or the sneer of unbelief? One thing is certain, the devil as cordially hates the doctrine of the unity of the body as he hates any other doctrine of divine revelation; and he will as assuredly seek to hinder any attempt to carry it out, as he sought to hinder the rebuilding of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah.

But let us not be discouraged. It is enough for us that we find in God's Word the precious truth of the one body. Let us bring the light of this to bear upon the present condition of the professing church, and see what it will reveal to our eyes. It will, most assuredly, put us on our faces in the dust before our God because of our ways; but, at the same time, it will lift our hearts up to the contemplation of the divine standard. It will so enlighten and elevate our souls as to render us thoroughly dissatisfied with everything that does not present some expression, however feeble, of the unity of the body of Christ. It is wholly impossible that anyone can drink into his soul the truth of the one body, and rest satisfied with anything short of the practical recognition thereof. True, he must make up his mind to bear the brunt of the enemy's opposition. He will meet a Sanballat here, and a Rehum there; but faith can say- "Is God for me? I fear not, though all against me rise; When

I call on Christ my Savior, the host of evil flies."

There is ample encouragement for our souls in the Word of God. If we look at Josiah just before the captivity, what do we see? A man simply taking the Word as his guide-judging himself and all around by its light-rejecting all that was contrary to it, and seeking with earnest purpose of heart to carry out what he found written there. And what was the result? The most blessed passover that had been celebrated since the days of Samuel.

Again, if we look at Daniel during the captivity, what do we see? A man acting simply on the truth of God and praying toward Jerusalem, though death stared him in the face as the consequence of his act. What was the result? A glorious testimony to the God of Israel, and the destruction of Daniel's enemies.

Finally, if we look at the remnant after the captivity, what do we see? Men in the face of appalling difficulties rebuilding the city which was, and shall be, God's earthly center. And what was the result? The joyous celebration of the feast of tabernacles, which had not been known since the days of Joshua the son of Nun.

Now, if we take any one of the above interesting cases, and inquire as to the effect of their looking at surrounding circumstances, what answer shall we get? Take Daniel, for instance. Why did he open his window toward Jerusalem? Why look toward a city in ruins? Why call attention to a spot which only bore testimony to Israel's sin and shame? Would it not be better to let the name of Jerusalem sink into oblivion? Ah! we can guess at Daniel's reply to all such inquiries. Men might smile at him, too, and deem him a visionary enthusiast. But he knew what he was doing. His heart was occupied with God's center, the city of David, the grand gathering point for Israel's twelve tribes. Was he to give up God's truth because of outward circumstances? Surely not. He could not consent to lower the standard even the breadth of a hair. He would weep, and pray, and fast, and chasten his soul before God, but never lower the standard. Was he going to give up God's thoughts about Zion because Israel had proved unfaithful? Not he. Daniel knew better than this. His eye was fixed on God's eternal truth, and hence, though he was in the dust because of his own sins and his people's, yet the divine banner floated above his head in its unfading glory.

Just so now, dear Christian reader, we are called to fix the gaze of faith upon the imperishable truth of the one body, and not only to gaze upon it, but to seek to carry it out in our feeble measure. This should be our one definite and constant aim. We should ever and only seek the expression of the unity of the body. We are not to ask, How can this be? Faith never asks, How? in the presence of divine revelation. It believes and acts. We are not to surrender the truth of God on the plea that we cannot carry it out. The truth is revealed, and we are called to bow to it. We are not called to form the unity of the body. Very many seem to think that this unity is a something which they themselves are to set up or form in some way or another. This is a mistake. The unity exists. It is the result of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the body, and we have to recognize it and walk in the light of it. This will give great definiteness to our course.

It is always immensely important to have a distinct object before the heart, and to work with direct reference thereto. Look at Paul, that most devoted of workmen. What was his aim? For what did he work? Hear the answer in his own words: "I Paul... now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the

church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily." Col. 1:24-29.

Now, this was a great deal more than the mere conversion of souls, precious as that is most surely. Paul preached the gospel with a direct view to the body of Christ, and this is the pattern for all evangelists. We should not rest in the mere fact that souls are quickened; we should keep before our minds their incorporation, by the one Spirit, into the one body. This would effectually preserve us from sect-making-from preaching to swell the ranks of a party-from seeking to get persons to join this, that, or the other denomination. We should know nothing whatever but the one body, because we find nothing else in the New Testament. If this be lost sight of, the evangelist will not know what to do with souls when they are converted. A man may be used in the conversion of hundreds-a most precious work indeed-precious beyond all expression-and if he does not see the unity of the body, he must be at sea as to their further course. This is very serious, both as to himself and them, and also as to the testimony for Christ.

May God's Spirit lead all Christians to see this great truth in all its bearings. We have but glanced at it, in connection with our theme; but it demands much serious attention at the present moment. It may be that some of our readers are disposed to find fault with what they may deem a long digression from the subject of "Life and Times of Josiah." But, in truth, it should not be looked on as a digression, but as a line of truth flowing naturally out of that subject-a line, too, which cannot possibly be overestimated.

Life and Times of Josiah: Part 7

2 Chronicles 34 and 35 - By C.H.M.

In closing our remarks on the "Life and Times of Josiah," we shall in few words advert, first to the fact of his celebration of the passover, and second to the solemn close of his history. Our sketch of this truly interesting period would, unquestionably, be incomplete were these things omitted.

And first then as to the fact-so full of interest and encouragement - that, at the very close of Israel's history, there should be one of the brightest moments that Israel had ever known. What does this teach us? It very manifestly teaches us that in darkest times it is the privilege of the faithful soul to act on divine principles, and to enjoy divine privileges. We look upon this as a most weighty fact for all ages, but specially weighty at the present moment. If we did nothing more, by writing our papers on Josiah, than to impress this great fact on the mind of the Christian reader, we should consider that we had not written in vain. If Josiah had been influenced by the spirit and principle which, alas! seem to actuate so many in this our day, he never would have attempted to celebrate the passover at all. He would have folded his arms and said, "It is useless to think of maintaining any longer our great national institutions. It can only be regarded as a piece of presumption to attempt the celebration of that ordinance which was designed to set forth Israel's deliverance from judgment by the blood of the lamb, when Israel's unity is broken, and its national glory faded and gone."

But Josiah did not reason like this. He simply acted upon the truth of God. He studied the Scriptures, and rejected what was wrong, and did what was right. "Moreover, Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month." 2 Chron. 35:1. This was taking higher ground than Hezekiah had taken, inasmuch as he kept his passover "on the fourteenth day of the second month" (chap. 30:15). In so doing, Hezekiah was, as we know, availing himself of the provision which grace had made for cases of defilement (see Numb. 9:9-11). The divine order, however, had fixed "the first month" as the proper period; and to this order Josiah was enabled to conform. In short, he took the very highest ground, according to the truth of God, while lying low under the deep sense of personal and national failure. This is ever the way of faith.

"And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD, and said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the LORD, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders: serve now the LORD your God, and His people Israel. And prepare yourselves by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son: and stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the families of the fathers of your brethren the people, and after the divisions of the families of the Levites. So kill the Passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses."

Here we have Josiah taking the loftiest ground, and acting on the highest authority. The most cursory reader cannot fail to be arrested as he scans the lines just quoted from the inspired record, by the names of "Solomon" - "David" - "Moses" - "all Israel" - and, above all, by the expression- so full of dignity, weight, and power - "that they may do according to the word of the LORD." Most memorable words! May they sink down into our ears, and into our hearts! Josiah felt it to be his high and holy privilege to conform to the divine standard, notwithstanding all the errors and evils which had crept in, from age to age. God's truth must stand forever. Faith owns and acts on this precious fact, and reaps accordingly. Nothing can be more lovely than the scene enacted on the occasion to which we are now referring. Josiah's strict adherence to the word of the Lord is not more to be admired than his large-hearted devotedness and liberality.

"And Josiah gave to the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all for the passover offerings, for all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks: these were of the king's substance. And his princes gave willingly unto the people, to the priests, and to the Levites:... So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their courses, according to the king's commandment.... And the singers the sons of Asaph were in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer; and the porters waited at every gate; they might not depart from their service; for their brethren the Levites prepared for them. So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt offerings upon the altar of the LORD. according to the commandment of king Josiah. And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. And 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. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept."

What a picture! King, princes, priests, Levites, singers, porters, all Israel, Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem- all gathered together - all in their true place and at their appointed work, according to the word of the Lord-and all this, "in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah," when the entire Jewish polity was on the very eve of dissolution. Surely this must speak to the heart of the thoughtful reader. It tells its own impressive tale, and teaches its own peculiar lesson. It tells us that no age, no circumstances, no influences, can ever change the truth of God, or dim the vision of faith. "The word of the Lord endureth forever," and faith grasps that word, and holds it fast in the face of everything.

It is the privilege of the believing soul to have to do with God and His eternal truth; and, moreover, it is the duty of such a one to aim at the very loftiest standard of action, and to be satisfied with nothing lower. Unbelief will draw a plea from The condition of things around to lower the standard, to relax the grasp, to slacken the pace, to lower the tone. Faith says, No! Let us bow our heads in shame and sorrow on account of our sin and failure, but keep the standard up. The failure is ours; the standard is God's. Josiah wept and rent his clothes, but he did not surrender the truth of God. He felt and owned that he and his brethren and his fathers had sinned, but that was no reason why he should not celebrate the Passover according to the divine order. It was as imperative upon him to do right as it was upon Solomon, David, or Moses. It is our business to obey the word of the Lord, and we shall assuredly be blessed in our deed. This is one grand lesson to be drawn from

the life and times of Josiah; and it is, undoubtedly, a seasonable lesson for our own times. May we learn it thoroughly! May we learn to adhere with holy decision to the ground on which the truth of God has set us, and to occupy that ground with a larger measure of true devotedness to Christ and His cause!

Most gladly would we linger over the brilliant and soul stirring scene presented in the opening verses of 2 Chronicles 35, but we must bring this paper to an end; and we shall merely glance very rapidly at the solemn and admonitory close of Josiah's history. It stands in sad and painful contrast with all the rest of his most interesting career, and sounds in our ears a note of warning to which we are bound to give our most serious attention. We shall do little more than quote the passage, and then leave the reader to reflect upon it, prayerfully and humbly, in the presence of God.

"After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple. Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying. 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. 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. And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchers of his fathers. And 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 to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel; and, behold, they are written in the lamentations." 2 Chron. 35:20-25.

All this is very sad and humbling. We do not wish to dwell upon it further than is absolutely needful for the purpose of instruction and admonition. The Holy Spirit does not expatiate, but He has recorded it for our learning. It is ever His way to give us men as they were-to write the history of their "deeds, first and last"-good and bad-one as well as another. He tells us of Josiah's piety, at the "first"; and of his willfulness, at the "last." He shows us that so long as Josiah walked in the light of divine revelation, his path was illuminated by the bright beams of the divine countenance; but the moment he attempted to act for himself - to walk by the light of his own eyes - to travel off the straight and narrow way of simple obedience- that moment dark and heavy clouds gathered around him, and the course that had opened in sunshine, ended in gloom. Josiah went against Necho without any command from God; yea, he went in direct opposition to words spoken "from the mouth of God." He meddled with strife that belonged not to him, and he reaped the consequences.

He "disguised himself." Why do this, if he was conscious of acting for God? Why wear a mask, if treading the divinely appointed pathway? Alas! alas! Josiah failed in this, and in his failure he teaches us a salutary lesson. May we profit by it! May we learn, more than ever, to seek a divine warrant for all we do, and to do nothing without it. We can count on God to the fullest extent if we are walking in His way; but we have no security whatever if we attempt to travel off the divinely appointed line. Josiah had no command to fight at Megiddo, and hence he could not count on

divine protection. He "disguised himself," but that did not shield him from the enemy's arrow. "The archers shot at king Josiah"-they gave him his death wound, and he fell, amid the tears and lamentations of a people to whom he had endeared himself by a life of genuine piety and earnest devotedness.

May we have grace to imitate him in his piety and devotedness, and to guard against his willfulness. It is a serious thing for a child of God to persist in doing his own will. Josiah went to Megiddo when he ought to have tarried at Jerusalem, and the archers shot him, and he died. Jonah went to Tarshish, when he ought to have gone to Nineveh, and he was flung into the deep. Paul persisted in going to Jerusalem, though the Spirit told him not to, and he fell into the hands of the Romans. Now, all these were true, earnest, devoted servants of God; but they failed in these things; and though God overruled their failure for blessing, yet they had to reap the fruit of their failure, for "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

The King in His Beauty: Psalm 45

It is a great point for us to seek to cultivate that in our souls which comes out in this psalm. What the King is Himself is that with which the queen is occupied. We should be occupied, in like manner, with what Christ is. We are very apt to drop down into occupation with the blessings which His gracious hand bestows upon us; but in this psalm it is not what the King does, but what He is, that is dwelt upon. What the Lord values is a heart that delights in Himself.

"My heart is indicting a good matter." The margin shows the meaning of indicting to be boiling, or bubbling up. I fear we are not often in this state. It is a great thing to have the heart boiling up with love to Christ. Instead of this, we are often at the freezing point - very far from the boiling point in the measure of our devotedness to Christ. What the "good matter" is, the verse explains: "I speak of the things which I have made touching the King"; that is, what I know of Him - not what I have received from Him, but what He is to me.

It is the place His blessed Person has in my soul.

Mary chose to be with Himself. She sat at His feet and listened to His words. To be near and with Him was what her soul desired. Affection for the Lord marked her condition, and her place was at His feet. She was absorbed with the Person of Christ. And did she lack intelligence? No; but it was not her object. She broke her box of precious ointment over Him, and Jesus said, "Against the day of My burying hath she kept this." She feared she might not again have the opportunity of doing it. Others made a feast for Jesus, but surely you would not feast one you knew was about to die. Mary's act was in keeping with the circumstances of her Lord. The feast was not so; she was at the feast, yet it did not occupy her. The One for whom the feast was made did. Her heart boiled with love to Him. She was the only one there really in the current of His thoughts. The Lord by His Spirit make our hearts to boil with real, true love to Christ! Love can only be satisfied with love. He loved us unto death, and He seeks in return the true affection of our hearts for Himself. He is worthy of it, beloved brethren.

"My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." It is easy to speak of Christ, and to praise Him, when the heart is bubbling up with love to Him. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If we are silent in worship and praise, it shows the heart must be empty. Christ as an object does not fill the affections. You say, The Spirit must move us to worship. Yes; but if there is not worship, it is evident you are not moved. It is quite true we are to be subject in the worship of the assembly to the leading of the Holy Ghost. So we are taught in the first epistle to the Corinthians; but in this psalm there is subjection to the Spirit of God, and withal a heart overflowing with that which it knows concerning the King. I envy the state of soul here manifested. Listen to the language: "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into Thy lips." The address is to Himself. She is so near she can speak to Him.... He is to her the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely One; but the one here is so near she can speak to the King; and all slips out easily: "Therefore God hath blessed Thee forever." In such intimate nearness there is acquaintance with the mind of God as to His purpose concerning the One He delights to honor.

"Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most Mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness." There is a right sense of the majesty of His Person. He was outraged by man, and the puny but guilty arm of man had been raised against Him in the hour of betrayal and falsehood; but the day will come when He shall ride prosperously because of truth. He was the meek and lowly One; but "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"; and the result of His lowly grace would be His exaltation. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Thy kingdom is a right scepter. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows."

Here He is saluted as God, and in Psalm 2 by God as His Son. He is anointed above His fellows; He is pre-eminent among the fellows. Who are these fellows? Hebrews 2 shows that we are His fellows: "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He leads praise in their midst (v. 12). And again we read, "We are made partakers [or fellows] of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Chap. 3:14. He is anointed with the oil of gladness, and the precious ointment drops from the head to the skirts of His garments. In the day of Christ's glory, when He will ride prosperously, we shall be with Him, and shall share that glory; the oil of gladness will drop on us.

"All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad." There is fragrance in Christ, and that should come out in us. "We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:15).

"Kings' daughters were among Thy honorable women: upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." When the King is spoken of, the bride is Jerusalem; so this psalm has a millennial bearing. Israel will look on Him whom she rejected and pierced, and will mourn. The Lord will save His people from their sins, and in divine righteousness give them a place in His presence. "Upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." Then will she consider, and incline her ear to Him. She is to forget her own people and her father's house. But what does this teach us? That there must be the bringing in of Christ between the soul and everything here. Nature must be distanced by Him; I must forget it. Christ must be my first Object. Is He the first consideration with us? or is itself and our houses, and the care of them - the family, the friend, or the father's house? The Spirit of God here says, "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house"; and Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37).

"So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty!" He will then see beauty in thee. You will then be for Christ what Eve was to Adam. And there is the other side: "He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him." The claims of the Lord weigh with those who have Christ as their Object. What joy when our souls in any measure enter into this! Christ eclipsing everything, and worship freely flowing out to Him. And we read of the beauty of the King's daughter, that she "is all glorious within." Here are her moral adornings, graced in the virtues of Christ. His beauty is that in which she shines, and because of it He gets praise; "There shall the people praise Thee."

What is God doing now? Is He occupied with our blessing, our comfort? or is it not rather with the glory of the One He delights to honor - with Christ, whom He will set as the center of all things and Head over all? God seeks praise for Him, and this because of what we now are morally, as in spirit and behavior, like Christ, adorned with His virtues; and in another day, because of what we shall

be when like Him, and with Him in bodies of glory like unto His own glorious body; then we shall be manifested as "the sons of God," as the fellows of Christ, and endless glory will be our happy portion. The Lord by His Spirit keep His dear Son before each of our hearts, that we may have the sense that He is ever near and with us, and that we walk with Him. "He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him."

"My heart is full of Christ, and longs
Its glorious matter to declare.
Of Him I make my loftier songs;
I cannot from His praise forbear.
My ready tongue makes haste to sing
The glories of the heavenly King.
"Fairer than all the earthborn race;
Perfect in comeliness Thou art;
Replenished are Thy lips with grace,
And full of love Thy tender heart.
God ever blest, we bow the knee,
And own all fullness dwells in Thee."

On Knowing God's Will

People would like a convenient and comfortable means of knowing God's will, as one might get a receipt for anything; but there exists no means of ascertaining it without reference to the state of our own soul. Further, we sometimes seek God's will, desiring to know how to act in circumstances in which it is not His will that we should be found at all. If conscience were in real healthful activity, its first effect would be to make us quit them. It is our own will that sets us there; and we should like, nevertheless, to enjoy the consolation of God's direction in a path which we ourselves have chosen. Such is a very common case.

Be assured that, if we are near enough to God, we shall have no trouble to know His will. In a long and active life it may happen that God, in His love, may not always at once reveal His will to us, that we may feel our dependence, particularly where the individual has a tendency to act according to his own will. However, "If... thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light" (Matt. 6:22); whence it is certain that if the whole body is not full of light, the eye is not single. You will say, That is poor consolation. I answer, It is a rich consolation for those whose whole desire is to have the eye single and to walk with God; not, so to speak, for those who would avoid trouble in learning His will objectively, but for those whose desire is to walk with God. "If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if any man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." John 11:9, 10. It is always the same principle. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). You cannot withdraw yourself from this moral law of Christianity.

Thus the Apostle prays that "ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Col. 1:9, 10.

The mutual connection of these things is of immense importance for the soul. The Lord must be known intimately, if one would walk in a way worthy of Him; and it is thus that we grow in the knowledge of God's will. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ." Finally, it is written, that the spiritual man "judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man" (1 Cor. 2:15).

It is then the will of God, and a precious will, that we should be able to discern it only according to our own spiritual state. In general, when we think we are judging circumstances, it is God who is judging us—who is judging our state. Our business is to keep close to Him; God would not be good to us, if He permitted us to discover His will without that.

Their Latter End

"O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Deut. 32:29.

In the life of a man of purpose, everything takes its coloring from the end to be attained. And if this is so in the natural life, so surely should it be in the exercise of the divine life. Hope—that is, something beyond—is the spring of human life from the cradle to the grave, even when a man's view is limited to this world. True hope has to do with God and His purpose.

In the daily life of a Christian, when the end to be attained is clearly seen, and God's purpose is accepted by the soul, still, I think, he has to learn another thing on the road. Nature always resists God's purpose for us, and we have to learn God's estimate of it as the flesh. I think we shall find there is no other way to go on. There is one way out for us, and God will surely bring us out, and accomplish His purpose in us all; but I must go through the process, painful as it is, wherein I learn what flesh is, and that God's heart is set upon the end for me, and not on the necessary flesh-rejecting, present process through which I am passing. He wants my heart to be set upon it too. Nothing diverts Him, and everything moves on in my circumstances, which He has arranged, toward the accomplishment of His purpose for me. Whatever may happen to me on the road, God's heart has in view the end, where there shall be no flesh and no evil occurrent. He would have us now, as we thread our way along His path for us (the everyday circumstances of each human life), to be in communion with His mind about this. He would occupy us with what are His ultimate purposes and counsel respecting us.

When a poor sinner considers his "latter end" as a sinner, it must land him in the blackness and horror of despair. And it is just at this point that the gospel comes in with all its blessed and gloom-dispelling light. "God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 4:6; J.N.D. Trans. I see here that it is all settled, all finished for me, a poor guilty sinner. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). And the glory which shines now, and which I see in the face of Jesus Christ, is God's warrant and rest for my soul. "The true light now shineth" (1 John 2:8). All is done. Thus the heart is set at rest as to the question of sins and judgment. But still I have to learn with God what the flesh is, and its corruption. This is the process when I have accepted God's purpose and counsel respecting me, and as I accept the one I have to learn the other.

But God would teach me the incurable nature of the flesh that is in me, not by occupying me with it, but rather with His purpose respecting me. I am privileged to say, wherever I may be along the path, But do we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose (Rom. 8)? I can say, It matters not what the fare on the road may be, so that I know surely and clearly what awaits me at home. God's desire is to occupy me with what awaits me there. Christ is there, and the joy of that scene is what He is. We are going to be exactly like that Christ.

It is in this way that I learn what the flesh is, not by being occupied with it, but by being occupied with God's final purpose and counsel for me. I ask, Is this God's purpose, to conform me to the image of His Son? How unlike Him I am now! What a wretched thing is this flesh in me - nothing but rebellion all the way along! This is true; but as my eye is upon the end and that blessed Object (to which it is God's purpose to conform me, and not mine to conform myself), I am "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

It was not when the Apostle Paul was looking at himself that he saw how imperfect he was, but it was when he was looking at Christ. "I press toward the mark." "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend [lay hold of] that for which also I am apprehended [laid hold of] of Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:12. Perfection here is complete likeness to Christ in glory. This was God's purpose for Paul, and nothing else is His purpose for each of us. But seeing that it was, getting hold of it in his inmost soul only set the Apostle running faster in the race. "I press toward the mark." It was clear and distinct before his eye, and it eclipsed for him everything else. "That I may win Christ." Has it become the eclipsing substance for us all?

Satan always is seeking to occupy me with myself. This occupation never leads to a true judgment of myself, though to be moaning over my inconsistencies may appear to some to be pious and humble. The true object is outside; and as I am engaged with it, and with God's purposes respecting me, I fashion my way and judge myself as an obstruction to those purposes. But Satan can get a good man occupied with himself. Job is an example of this, and in twenty chapters he expresses it; but God had to empty him of all that (Job 42:5, 6).

To get you so completely before yourself that God's purposes respecting you are all as if He had none - this is the object of the enemy. Herein was the ground of all the failure of Israel in the wilderness. Were they looking in unbelief at their strength, or in faith at God's purposes for them, when they thought of the giants of Anak?

I am going to be like Christ in glory; and as I look at that Christ I am "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." God's desire then for me, as expressed in Deut. 8:16 and 32:29 is, that I should consider the end - His end for me. And it is similar to what I find Paul considering in Philippians 3. He says, "I press toward the mark."

The Lord's Day and the Sabbath

Holy as the sabbath is, I have no hesitation in saying that the Lord's day, with which the Church has to do, is founded on deeper sanctity. The believer has now to beware on the one hand of confounding the sabbath with the Lord's day, and on the other of supposing that, because the Lord's day is not the sabbath, it may therefore be turned to a selfish and worldly account. The sabbath is the holy memorial of creation and the law, as the Lord's day is of grace and new creation in the resurrection of the Saviour. As Christians, we are neither of the old creation nor under the law, but stand on the totally different ground of Christ dead and risen.

The sabbath was for man and for the Jew - the last day of the week, and one simply of rest to be shared with his ox and his ass. This is not the Christian idea which begins the week with the Lord, gives the best to Him in worship, and makes one free to labor for Him in the midst of the world's sin and misery.

Manoah's Wife

I believe that very commonly when we read such writings as the epistle to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, or to the Hebrews, indeed any of the epistles, we might very profitably keep in memory the words of Manoah's wife to her husband. He was afraid, for they had seen God, and he thought he should die; but she said to him, "If the LORD were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these." Judg. 13:23.

A very simple, beautiful and convincing argument. Faith is always the best reasoner, because it uses the very arguments which God in grace suggests—as in this instance of this simple woman, whose simplicity of faith is apparent from the whole chapter. Her husband was rather a devout and good man, who walked more in a praying than a believing mind; but this simple reasoning of his wife may be our reasoning as we read such scriptures as those I have mentioned. There we find that our God has told us wonderful secrets, brought us into intimate and near relationship to

Himself, and looks for our presence in His sanctuary within a rent veil, with burnt offerings and sacrifices of praise. In such character and places as these He addresses us. And how full such a thing as that is of the great proof that He has no purpose of a controversy with us, but that He has already accepted our persons, and forgiven our sins. Surely it is. He would not, after this manner, set us in the place of either sons, friends, or worshipers, had He not first set us as accepted and pardoned. The less is surely included in the better.

And He Himself treats acceptance and pardon very much in that way in such epistles. He rather assumes it than teaches it. If He is recalled to it at all, it is because the saints were so disposed to return to the law, to the legal mind, and the world of ordinances. The question of pardon or justification suits the presence of God as a judge. But in some of these epistles our God speaks to us as a Father; or as from the sanctuary of peace; or as face to face, as a man would speak to a friend, communicating his secrets; or as one that has us with Himself in heavenly places; and He would not thus deal with us, we may say, in the spirit of Manoah's wife, if it were His pleasure to kill us, or to keep us under law, and in fear of judgment.

Indeed, the reasoning of the Apostle at the close of Romans 8 has this character in it. It may remind us of Manoah and his wife in the field of Zorah. For, like that believing woman, the Apostle is challenging the inferior thing in the presence or name of the higher thing. She says, He would not kill us, because He has spoken to us, and accepted our worship; the Apostle says, Who shall condemn, since Christ died, and rose, and intercedes!

Man's Heart and God's Heart

Luke 23:39- 4.3

God has not left us in darkness as to our state, nor as to His ways in grace toward us in that state. The blessed truth of His coming in love to this world before He comes in judgment, is a testimony to our state, but also to the love of God toward us in that state; and if we neglect this testimony, we have to come before Him in judgment. "Every knee shall bow"; but there is all the difference between bowing to Him as a Savior, and as a Judge. If we come to Him in grace as a Savior, we find our sins dealt with in another way than judgment. If my creditor comes to claim a debt, and I have nothing to pay, it is all over with me; but if he comes to pay it, I am clear. And we must have to do with God in one way or another. If, as having our sins dealt with on the cross, that is putting them away; if in judgment, that is imputing them to us.

The gospel is the testimony of what God has done before the day of judgment, that man might not have to answer for his sins.

God cannot approve of iniquity; that is impossible. But it is very different to insist upon the payment of a debt, and to come and pay it. The gospel is the testimony of what Christ did as Savior before He comes as Judge, and this testimony is for us to believe.

We get the work of the Spirit of God, which gives us a sense of our sins; the work done outside us, by which they are put away; and the testimony of the Holy Ghost to give us the knowledge of that work; for if unknown, I should be as uncomfortable as I was before.

We see in this scene what the human heart is when fully brought out (for it does not always show itself). We see, too, a work in a man, and a work for a man, and then the consciousness of it wrought in his soul. God makes us know forgiveness; He has not given His Son that we should be ignorant of it. I cannot talk of walking with God, if I do not know whether He is going to condemn me or not; you never heard of a criminal walking with his judge!

In looking at this scene, you will see how all were against the Lord Jesus. And why? He had healed their sick, cast out devils, raised the dead, so that Pilate could say, "Why, what evil hath He done?" I cannot call myself a Christian without saying that the world has crucified the Son of God. And the terrible thing is, all His works showed who was there. God had said, I will send My beloved Son: it may be they will reverence Him when they see Him. But this revelation of what God was only brought out the enmity, and now God has to say to the world, What have you done with My Son? What has He done to you? Nothing but good. Then why spit in His face, and crucify Him? If anyone had done so yesterday to my mother, could I go and be "hail fellow, well met" with him today? Man has done this; and when the light comes in, he confesses he has done it, and that he cannot answer one charge in a thousand.

The world is under judgment; we all know the world will come to an end; we all know it, and yet we go on with it!

The law comes to tell man what he ought to be: "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart"; "Thou shalt not covet." But I know I have not loved God, and I have lusted. I have broken the law in every particular. If I offend in one point, I am guilty of all. It is very simple: if I tell my child not to do three things, he does not care one bit to do two of them; but he does the third, which he does care about. A man must be a monster of iniquity to have committed all the sins in the world!

If you apply the law, "There is none righteous, no, not one." God does not say this in the day of judgment, but in the day of grace He warns us. He tells us beforehand, in mercy, what His judgment as to us is; if He were sitting on the great white throne, could it be any plainer than we get it in Romans 3? Can a man stand up after that, and say, I am righteous? Is that the way to meet God? Is He a liar?

People talk about mercy, which means they hope God will think as little about their sins as they do. A man has committed, say, ten sins - he hopes to go to heaven. If he has committed eleven, he thinks that is not too much; if a hundred, he hopes still-he has no thought of holiness. One sin shuts out from God, but the door is not shut to any, if they own their sins. If I am set to wash this table, it is not a question whether there are five spots or fifty, but can I wash it well?

Man only mocks the blessed Son of God; every detail of this scene gives us a picture of what man's heart is. Man is never ashamed of a false religion. A Mohammedan will say his prayers in the market; and if you are making a bargain with him, you may wait till he has done. A Hindu is not ashamed of the worship of his gods, but a Christian is ashamed of Christ. And so the Lord says, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." Luke 12:8.

The chief priests, who were set to intercede for weakness, cry out for His blood. Pilate, who was to judge the guilty and protect the innocent, washes his hands of the innocent. His own disciples flee from Him.

If two men are hung together, when did you ever hear of one insulting the other, unless he had brought him into the trouble? But when it comes to Christ, you get it. The human heart is enmity against God. The moment they get the opportunity, they all trample upon Him. Thank God, He was there in grace, but it shows what our hearts are. We all know some are criminal and vicious, and some are not. But the prodigal son was as much a sinner when he crossed his father's threshold, as when he was eating the husks; and that is where we all are.

Do you not like doing your own will? Do you not see it in your children? You find it out in them. And this is what sin is. The law condemns it, but it condemns me too. Do not fancy that it only condemns the sins; it says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. 3:10.

The law only shows what we ought to be, but does not tell us what we are. If I apply a right rule to a person who has cheated me, what does it do? Condemn him. The law does not give life, gives no help, but only a measure of what a child of Adam ought to be. God tells us what we are, and He tells us before the day of judgment comes, that we may lay it to heart and find the remedy. When Christ came, He put His sanction upon all that; for it was His own law, but He came in quite the opposite way. The law claimed the debt; Christ paid it, and that is grace! "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." 2 Cor. 5:19. God

came into the world because we were sinners; He did not stay in heaven and say, You behave well, and it will be well, but He came down because we were all wrong.

Who put it into God's heart to give His Son? Did you? Did the world? Why, it was in God's own heart to do it. He so loved the world, that He gave His Son. I can trust God's heart more than I can trust my own; there is no inconsistency in His heart; He is not double-minded, and I know His thoughts concerning me.

But more than that-Christ died for us. Why should I go to pull a person out of a ditch, if he is not in it? Why did He taste death? Because we were under death. Why take the cup of wrath? Because we were under judgment. What was all that sorrow about? My sin. Oh! I say, what unutterable love! and what a sinner I must be! It gives honesty of heart, not excusing ourselves, like Adam-hiding our sins if we can, and if not, excusing them.

If a man comes to pay my debts, I take care to bring up every farthing I owe. The effect of God's love is to give honesty of heart. I believe His love; I am glad to tell Him everything, or rather to know that He knows, and that I need not tell Him. He has come to clear us completely, and this produces honesty instead of concealment.

God is light and love, and He must be both wherever He comes. He comes in light and shows me where I am; and He comes in love to forgive.

Look at that poor woman who was a sinner. There was one heart in the world she could trust, and that was God's heart. Did she hide her sins? No; she came weeping and confounded about them, but she trusted Him - she trusted the love that brought the light to her. Take Peter in the ship. He goes up to Christ, and says, Depart from me! What did he go to Him for, then? He was drawn to Him by the sense of what He was, and when there, felt he was not fit to be there. The great man said, This Man is not a prophet. He was so dark, he had got God in his house, and could not find it out; the poor woman did.

Let us look at the poor thief in Luke 23. There was the work in him, and the work for him. What does he say? The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; it is the sense of what God is. He says, "Dost thou not fear God?" Then he confesses his sins; he owns he is suffering justly. The light had got into his soul.

We have been saying the world is wicked; so it is; but when the light comes, I say, I am wicked. An honest conscience owns its sins-"we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds." Then, "This man hath done nothing amiss." How did he know that? He had never been with Christ. He was taught of God; he could guarantee that Christ never did a wrong thing. Do your hearts pass their word for it that He never could? Has He been sufficiently revealed to your hearts for this?

Then he says, "Lord"!

Here is a strange thing. The chief priests and heads of the people were all mocking Him -His disciples had run away. What sign of Lordship was there? To a malefactor, apparently like himself, he says, "Lord." The only comforter the Lord had upon the cross was this poor thief.

"Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." He was dying the death of the gibbet. The sign that God had come into the world was a babe lying in a manger, and He ended on a cross, and all the way through had not where to lay His head. What faith in this poor thief! No matter if all the world was against him, He was a King all the same, and he says, You will come in your kingdom.

What was he thinking of? He was in an agony of pain on the cross, but he does not say, "Save Thyself and us." He owned He was the Lord, but does not ask Him to spare him one bit of pain - only, "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

How could he have such confidence in Him? Why, he was a thief. But what the light always does is to give confidence. What! Remember a thief who had just owned he was suffering justly? Can you trust Him like that, honestly confessing your sins, but trusting in God's heart when you own them? Do you trust Christ's heart? If you do not, you do not know Him, for He is trustworthy.

God gives us striking examples that they may strike us. All are not thieves, but it is really the same thing for us all. Have your hearts had Christ so revealed to them that, honest in your conscience before God, you trust God, when you know what you are? See that poor woman trusting Christ with all her sins before her; that is not always so easy, for if our sins are before us, we reason, and wonder how God will receive us. Are you wondering how God will receive you? Then you have not met Him yet, or you would know how. When the prodigal came to his father, he did not say, Make me as one of thy hired servants. And why not? Because his father was on his neck, kissing, treating him as a son.

The thief owns his sins, but trusts Him. And then we get the Lord's answer: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Now is the Son of man glorified, for today shalt thou be with Me.

The poor thief was bearing the punishment of his sins from man, but who was bearing it from God? The One who hung beside him, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). When I have confidence in Christ, I say, I must go to God, and I find Christ on the way; and what is He doing there? Judging me? No; bearing all my sins. There is that blessed One whom I have been despising all my days, and I see He has taken my sins and borne my burden - He has taken them all, and I shall not bear them. Trust Him, no matter how bad you are. If you cannot trust any man, trust Him.

If He has won my heart to this confidence, I find that He who is going to be Judge has been dying for my sins; and how can He impute them to me? Supposing, of course, that I have owned and confessed my sins, and am coming to Him about them, I find the wonderful truth that Christ has been bearing them, and that God has dealt with them, and laid them upon Christ. I come beforehand to the day of judgment, and I

see in the Judge the Man who bore all my sins. How, then, can I fear Him? I find that God, because of my sins, has given His Son to bear them all into a waste land, not inhabited.

The work for me is totally finished, but it is not finished in me. I ought to grow more like Him every day; but the work for me, as regards my guilt, is finished; and if it is not perfectly finished, when is it to be? He cannot die again, cannot suffer again, cannot drink that dreadful cup again. That cup made Him sweat great drops of blood in only thinking about what it was to be made a curse for us,

and He cannot be made that over again. He is set down because the work is done. How little they thought they were sending the poor thief straight to paradise, when they sent to break his legs!

And now about knowing it, for that is the important point; the Lord told him he was to be with Him that day. And was he to believe it?

It happened to him, but it was written for us. If I come to Him, I know He has finished the work, and has put my sins away. The work was done once for all, and, through the grace of God, brought to me. Knowing no other name under heaven whereby I can be saved, I find He has put my sins away, and I know it! He has gone back into the glory, because He has finished the work. The Holy Ghost brings it home to our hearts, and I say He has finished the work. As in Romans 4: "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." His resurrection is the proof that God has accepted the work. If Christ be not raised, ye are yet in your sins; but if raised, He has borne them, and I am not in them.

What part had we in the cross-I mean in bringing it about? Nothing but our sins, and the hatred that killed Christ-that is all! And that is what humbles us, and brings us, dependent on the grace of God, to say, My sins brought Him there; but God, instead of putting me away, put them away.

Why is the gospel preached? Is it that we should know it, or that we should not? He has made peace; and how careful God is to show us this, that we may be happy! Defiled, I am cleansed; guilty, I am justified. You say, But I have offended God dreadfully. So you have, but there is forgiveness. God has not a thing against you; Christ has borne it all. He has got the fruit of my sins, and I have got the fruit of His work. If we come thus to God, the very Christ who put our sins away is the very Judge before whom we shall appear. How do believers come before the judgment seat? "It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory" (1 Cor. 15:43). He comes and receives me to Himself, and that is the way I get to the judgment seat. How can the believer fear, if, when he sees his Judge, he is like Him?

What opened the poor woman's heart in John 4? Not speaking about the living water, but, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." Her heart was opened by her conscience being reached; "If thou knewest the grace of God." Giving, not imputing- If you knew who it was who had come so low as to be dependent on a woman like you for a drink of water, you would have confidence in Him. And so would you, if you knew the Son of God come down to a manger and a cross - you would have confidence in Him.

And that is what He is doing in Christ - winning back the confidence of man's heart, when he cannot trust Him because of his sins. The love of God came into the world when men were in their sins; there was love enough in Him to give Himself.

Do you believe that love? If so, there is the plain statement, "By Him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:39). He did not bear half, and leave me to perish by the other half.

When I come to Him, I find that, instead of meeting me in the day of judgment, He has met me in the day of grace.

Marah

Scarcely had died away the rapturous notes of Israel's joy and exultation, because of their deliverance from all the power and malice of Egypt, before they were made to feel the barrenness and dearth of the wilderness. With what high and elated thoughts of God's goodness and power did they step out into the wilderness! Surely they were little prepared for this, their first march in it! To go three days and find no water, and when they reached some, to find it "bitter"! What a contrast to the high tone and brilliant expectations they had just celebrated in song! How differently had they expected of God! How natural it was for them, as knowing and rejoicing in the great work of deliverance which He had accomplished for them, to reckon on His providing a scene of unbroken happiness for them.

Thus is it often with believers now, after having in like manner, as it were, crossed the Red Sea. They have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and they rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. They have the exulting experience of Rom. 5:2, but can they say, "and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also"? Do they as a rule even expect tribulation here, much less glory in it? They are in all the exuberance of delight, because of peace with God, and hope of the glory of God. But what of this world, this wilderness? Have not many of us expected and even toiled to find all easy and agreeable here? Have we not sought to make ourselves happy here? Have we not been disappointed, depressed, almost inconsolable, when we have found no water here, and what there is, only bitter? We have entered the wilderness without understanding what it is. We have expected that the God who has blessed our souls with such peace and exultation over the enemy and over death, should preserve and screen us from sorrow.

In the spirit of our minds. we have not been one whit better than Israel. We have murmured and complained, toiled and fretted, to find easy and agreeable circumstances here. But it cannot be. The wilderness illustrates what the world is to the saint, and the first stage of the journey gives a character of the whole. It is all drought. There is nothing in it for Christ. He has been rejected out of it. There is nothing in it for God or for His people. The world has condemned itself in its inability to value Christ. If the best cannot be valued, how can anything inferior? If the world has nothing for God in it, if it has rejected the best thing God could send into it, how can I expect Him to make it easy and agreeable to me?

On the contrary, if true to Him, and estimating the world as He does, I glory in tribulation; for tribulation works endurance; endurance, experience; and experience, hope; and hope makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which He has given us. We ought to start in the wilderness expecting nothing but dearth; and in not doing so, is where many of us have failed. Our expectations have been like Israel's; and our disappointment and disheartenment at not finding them realized, like theirs also. We have, in fact, had to go back and begin anew-start aright. Most of our failings in the wilderness march are attributed to our having started with a wrong idea of what the wilderness is. Ease or rest we cannot find in it; and the more we expect it, the more we shall chafe under the disappointment. The first stage in our

journey must proclaim to us, as to Israel, what the true nature of the journey is. It is Marah.

What then is to be done? The water is bitter. God can make it sweet. He shows Moses a tree which, when cast into the water, makes it sweet. This is Christ crucified. This is what the world rejected, and the only good thing which God has to give His people in passing through it. Nay, more; the bitterness of the circumstances which I am passing through, is only an opportunity for Christ to come in, and so make the bitter sweet. If you have no Marah here, you know not the power of Christ to convert it into sweetness. Paul in prison at Rome, and John at Patmos, were in very bitter circumstances; but would they have changed them for any other, seeing that those circumstances were the opportunity for the revelation of Christ?

God cannot let me find both sweetness here, and sweetness in Christ. If I will have the sweetness of circumstances, I shall not have the sweetness of Christ in the bitter circumstances, for it is He who brightens up the dark circumstances.

Let me once be brought to see that without the bitter circumstances I could not have such knowledge of Christ, and I shall murmur at them no more. I accept them; nay, I glory in tribulation. It is not only that I am quiet and resigned, braving my circumstances in the strength of natural character. No, I know they are bitter, but I do not occupy myself with the bitterness, because God has given me to know more of Christ in it-so much so, that I should be sorry that they should be altered, lest I should lose what I have learned of Christ in them, making them sweet. I am thus prepared for tribulation, but I am also assured of finding in Christ a greater and fuller delight, so that the tribulation is hailed as another opportunity for disclosing to my heart as a sufferer here, the excellency and virtue of Christ. I am neither vexed nor disappointed; I am in the happiness of God. I joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation. Amen.

Mary and Martha

Luke 10:38-42

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

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

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

And oh, dear brethren, what principles are here disclosed to us! Our God is asserting for Himself the place of supreme power and supreme goodness, and He will have us debtors to Him. Our sense of His fullness is more precious to Him than all the service we can render Him. Entitled, as He is, to more than all creation could give Him, yet above all things does He desire that we should use His love, and draw from His treasures. The honor which our confidence puts upon Him is His highest honor; for it is the divine glory to be still giving, still blessing, still pouring forth from unexhausted fullness. Under the law, He had to receive from us; but in the gospel, He is giving to us; and the words of the Lord Jesus are these: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). And this place He will fill forever; for, "Without all contradiction the less is blessed of the

better." Heb. 7:7. Praise shall, it is true, arise to Him from everything that has breath; but forth from Himself, and from the seat of His glory, shall go the constant flow of blessing. And our God shall taste His own joy, and display His own glory, in being a Giver forever.

Middle East Turbulence

In the light of recent dramatic and fast-moving events in the Middle East, several of our readers have suggested that we reprint the excellent and appropriate editorials of Paul Wilson in 1958 on this very subject and involving the same nations. We are happy to reprint the following article from our April 1958 issue.

News of the merger of Egypt and Syria into one nation, with Cairo the capital of the new state, accentuates the place that the Middle East now occupies in the growing world power struggle. It is in this section that war is most likely to break out. Russia has in the last few years forced her way into the region by military and other aid to Egypt and Syria, and her finger may well be decisive in the present move. She has outflanked her traditional old enemy, Turkey, by gaining the support of Syria and, though farther removed, Egypt.

The West was without competition in the Middle East for a long, long time; but today the nations of that part of the world are becoming pawns between the two great forces which are at work. It is not a matter of choice with the West either, for her vast industrialized economy is geared to oil, and, to a large degree, Middle East oil. The newly merged Egyptian Syrian state now sits astride both the Suez Canal and all the operating oil pipe lines carrying oil to the West. It is now possible for the new Arab state to shut off all Middle East oil to Western Europe, except the amount that could be shipped back east through the Indian Ocean and then all the way around the continent of Africa.

But aside from any consideration of oil or its control, the common hatred of the Jews, and of the State of Israel, has perhaps the greatest appeal to these Arab peoples. They have a deeply inbred hatred of Israel, and both Syria and Egypt have been nursing a new grudge since they were defeated by the Israeli armies-Syria once and Egypt twice in a decade. They both vow to get revenge.

Today Israel is caught in a pincers operation, as it lies between Egypt and Syria. The Israeli situation is further complicated by the fact that the nation of Jordan on her east is both militarily and economically weak and shaky, and it could with very little effort be swallowed up by the new state. In that event Israel would have three sides exposed to this avowed enemy, with a Russian-equipped Egyptian-Syrian navy patrolling her seacoast on the west. Israel would be isolated or have to fight her way out.

This present alignment, however, could easily be broken, for the whole Arab world is in somewhat of a state of flux; and a coup d'etat by a military clique could overthrow the rulers in either end of the new nation. Nevertheless, the present circumstances do point up the serious threat of the Middle East to world peace and, more directly, to Israel's existence.

In the complex Middle East situation, Russia has definitely thrown her support to anti-Israel peoples and propaganda, while the West has been consistently trying to straddle the issue. Israel is definitely oriented toward the West, and it is to the West's advantage to support Israel, for she is the most dependable ally in the region; but (as before mentioned) the West must have the Middle

Eastern oil, and so does not dare to take an openly pro-Israel position. The West's stand is therefore anomalous and confused.

We cannot see through the present maze of conflicts of interests and obsessions, but we can with accuracy know how it will terminate. To this the world's statesmen are blind, but the Word of God instructs us. About the time of the Church's rapture to heaven, the Western "beast" - the head of the revived Roman Empire - will come forward and definitely guarantee Israel the land of Palestine for a period of seven years. He will give them their temple site and temple too. (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15-22; Dan. 12:11.) Very likely, overt acts of Arab hostility will cause the "beast" to act on behalf of Israel.

There is also a direct word, that at the end of these seven years the power hostile to Israel on her north will not be united with Egypt on her south, for "at the time of the end shall the king of the south [Egypt] push at him [the false king in Jerusalem]: and the king of the north [the hostile power on Israel's north-not Russia, but most likely with Russia's support] shall come against him [the false king] like a whirlwind,... and shall overflow and pass over." Dan. 11:40. Then the Jews' covenant with the revived Roman Empire "shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye [says the prophet] shall be trodden down by it." Isa. 28:18.

One lesson that may be learned from this sudden decision to unite two countries is the swiftness with which great moves take place in our day. It may also well furnish an object lesson to Western Europe which has been taking faltering steps now and again toward a union of powers. Such an event as the formation of a revived Roman Empire (which Scripture unqualifiedly predicts) requires a conditioning of the minds of the populace which have been indoctrinated through the years with national pride. Self-preservation will be the driving force to effectuate such a merger, and the mental conditioning process has been going on for a considerable time. Now an object lesson has been furnished the West by the fusing of the two Arab nations into one on short notice.

Everything on every hand indicates that we are living at the end of this period of the grace of God. The Lord's coming for His people IS IMMINENT! And yet we fear that many of His dear people are too busy with the "cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things" to take cognizance of these times. Days of unprecedented prosperity have lulled many saints to sleep, or at least into profound drowsiness. Many dismiss the comments of the imminence of the Lord's coming as having been heard before; but a little persecution, ill health, loss of property, loss of livelihood, would quickly beget an upward look which would hopefully scan the sky for the first sign of the morning star. A shipwrecked mariner, adrift all night on the wide expanse of the ocean, would eagerly watch the eastern sky for the first indication that the morning was at hand, while those in the same vicinity on an ocean liner, safe in their comfortable berths, would be asleep. O dear fellow-Christians, "let us not sleep as do others," but with watchful patience anticipate the moment of His call to meet Him in the air. There are unmistakable signs of the closing in of this age; therefore, look up, for your redemption by power is at hand. May attachment to His Person cause us to long to see Him, while we place a correct estimate on the scene around us.

■ After considering modern Syria, it may be of profit to take a look back through history (divine and secular) and notice the place that the capital city of Damascus has occupied.

Damascus is probably the oldest city in the world, unless we except the city of Enoch which Cain built (Gen. 4:17). It is mentioned in Gen. 14:15 as being then existent and located on the right hand of a place called "Hobah." Abraham's steward, Eliezer, was of Damascus (Gen. 15:2). Josephus the Jewish historian said that the city was founded by Uz, grandson of Shem. Be that as it may, we know it was of very ancient origin.

Damascus is beautifully situated on both banks of the Barada (Abana of Scripture) River, on the northwestern edge of a fertile valley. This fruitful valley is also watered by the River Awaj, or the Pharpar River of 2 Kings 5:12. These two picturesque rivers were almost the undoing of Syria's great commanding general Naaman in the days of Elisha. Naaman, as is well known, was a leper, although he was a victorious and honored general; at the suggestion of a captive Israelitish girl, he went to Israel to see if he could be cured of his leprosy. After some misadventures and misunderstandings, he finally arrived at the house of the prophet Elisha. There he was told to go and bathe in the Jordan River seven times and he would be healed. This was most distasteful to him, for it was a muddy river and very unlike the two streams of Damascus and the surrounding valley, so he started away in a rage. It was the wise counsel of his servants that finally prevailed upon him to go down into the Jordan, according to the word of the prophet. He was then fully healed (2 Kings 5).

How closely his actions parallel the vain conceit of men today who would be healed of the plague of sin by some ingenious device of their own which would maintain their honor and dignity, as they think, rather than submit to humiliation and repentance toward God, and simple faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is, however, no salvation in any other way, for "There is none other name under heaven... whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

In the days of David, the Syrians of Damascus came to succor the king of Zoba with whom David fought. At that time David slew 22,000 Syrians, and put garrisons in Syria, so that they became tributary to David (2 Sam. 8:5, 6). But when David's illustrious son Solomon turned away from the Lord and served other gods, the Lord stirred up Rezon the son of Eliadah who dwelt in Damascus. This man became an adversary to "Israel all the days of Solomon,... and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria." (1 Kings 11:23-25.)

Later, the kings of Syria, who resided at Damascus, frequently warred against the ten tribes of Israel. There have been at least three kings of Damascus called Benhadad who successfully fought against Israel. (1 Kings 15:16-20; chap. 20; 2 Kings 10:32, 33; 12:17, 18; 13:22, 3-7.) There were some deliverances from the Syrian oppressors according to the prophecy of the dying Elisha (2 Kings 13:14-25), and the only prophecy recorded of the prophet Jonah concerning Israel was of a deliverance from the king of Damascus. This was fulfilled by "Jeroboam the son of Joash" (2 Kings 14:23-27).

About a century later the Lord brought Judah (name used to signify the two tribes) low for their sins, and Rezin the king of Syria, allied with the king of the ten tribes, came against Jerusalem; but King Ahaz of Judah trespassed more against the Lord, "For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said. Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel" (2 Chron. 28:22-25). He went so far as to write a description of a heathen altar which he saw in Damascus and send it to the high priest in Jerusalem, that he might make a copy of it. This

was done, and Ahaz offered sacrifices on it, and commanded the high priest to use it. (See 2 Kings 16:10-16.)

There are many more times that Damascus is mentioned in the Old Testament, and when we come to the New Testament we find that the ancient city had a prominent place in the early days of Christianity. Saul of Tarsus was on his way to this city to persecute Christians who were there when he was stricken by the light from heaven which was brighter than the sun at noonday. It was near the city that this great enemy of Christ was brought to a sudden halt. Then he, being blind, was led by the hand into the old city of Damascus, and found lodging on Straight Street. This street is still distinguishable today. Among all the crooked and narrow streets of the old part of the city, there is one street which is straight for a mile in length and has ruins of old Corinthian columns along it. Ananias was sent to Straight Street to locate Saul in his days of anguish of soul when he neither ate nor slept for three days. And it was there that the great Apostle of the Gentiles received deliverance and was told of the Lord's call to him. And in Damascus the truth was first preached that Jesus was the Son of God. (Read Acts 9.) What a wonderful privilege was granted to Damascus of old to hear those great tidings of salvation. But Jewish opposition caused Paul to escape the city by an ignominious exit over the wall in a basket (2 Cor. 11:32).

Syria was specially blessed by God with the early proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles, for not only in the city of Damascus was Christ preached, but the city of Antioch (now only ruins) was the site of the first Gentile Christian assembly. It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26), and that Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and Mark were frequently seen. It became a center for evangelization of the Gentiles, and from there the Holy Spirit sent forth Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:2). It was there that the conflict between the liberty in Christ and the legal requirements of Judaism came to a head, and the issue was taken to Jerusalem where Christian liberty was stoutly maintained (Acts 15). And yet in spite of such great advantages. the area became spiritually darkened, and the truth lost.

Today the population of Syria is 85% Mohammedan, and less than 14% professing Christians. If men will not have the truth, God will allow them to be deceived and believe a lie. This is going to happen to the now highly favored Western nations. (2 Thess. 2:10-12.)

In the year 635 the city of Damascus was taken by the followers of Mohammed. In 1401 it fell to the conquering Mongol Tamerlane, who pillaged the city and slaughtered most of its inhabitants.

On July 9, 10, and 11 of 1860, the Christian section of the city was destroyed in an uprising by the Moslem populace, and about 6,000 Christians perished. It changed hands often throughout the centuries, and on September 16, 1941, it was declared the capital of the new free state of Syria; the latest census estimates the population of the city as 408,774 in 1955. Its long history has been one of frequent strife and turmoil, and this is probably not over.

We may hear more of this city in the future, for it seems destined to at least be in the orbit (if not the capital) of the future "king of the north" who will be openly hostile to the Jews in their land, as it was prominent in the days of the Selucidae, who persecuted the Jews in the days of the Maccabees, and who were then called in Scripture the kings of the north (Dan. 11). As we have pointed out in previous issues, it is entirely possible that most of the Arab world (or perhaps even the Moslem world) in Asia will be in alliance against Israel. Psalm 83 gives the future confederated

enemies of Israel - the descendants of Moab and Ammon, Ishmael, Esau, the Philistines, and the Assyrians.

-> Following the merger of Egypt and Syria into the United Arab Republic, a competing federation is being formed by Iraq and Jordan. The latter is a looser but more natural union than the former; their kings will retain their respective thrones while they operate under one flag, with one army, and one foreign service; their lands are conterminous, thus not separated by Israel, as are Egypt and Syria.

While this new confederation was planned as a counterbalance to the aspirations of President Nasser to use his new republic (so-called) to gain ascendancy over all Arab peoples, yet it is not a source of comfort to the nation of Israel. The

Arab people in both confederations have deep-seated animosity toward Israel, and they may vie with each other in expressing hostility to the Jews. The recent moves really constitute an enlargement of the potential threat to Israel.

One thing seems clearly indicated by all this Middle East activity; namely, powers both seen and unseen are stirring the Middle East in preparation for the times that Scripture has foretold. All is a continuing indication that we are living in the last hour. It is not as aforetime when some occurrence seemed to presage the nearness of the Lord's coming, but with considerable lapse of time before the next appeared. Now, one portentous event follows another in rapid succession, and not in one field only. Wherever one may look-East or West, North or South, the Jews or the nations, religiosity or infidelity, all indicate that His coming is at the very door.

The Morning Star

It has been truly said by someone that the Old Testament Scriptures end with the hope of the coming of the "Sun of righteousness," and the New with that of the "morning star." Sweetly beautiful is this! The godly remnant of Israel, who feared the Lord and spake often one to another (Mal. 3), had the precious consolation before them of the coming of the "Sun of righteousness... with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4). And we find them in Luke 2, the Simeons and Annas and "all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (vv. 25-38), rejoicing in the advent of the "Sun of righteousness," "the consolation of Israel." But, alas! His beams fell coldly on the hearts of His nation—they had no heart for Him! Men were morally unfit to have God among them; and so He was obliged to hide His beams of blessing in the darkened scene that surrounded His cross, and to reserve the day of blessing for a future season. Meanwhile our calling was revealed, and our hope presented to us - not as the "Sun of righteousness," but as the "morning star"!

The more we contemplate the fitness of this symbol of our hope, the more does its divine origin appear. It is the watchman during the long night, who sees the morning star for a few moments, while the darkness is rolling itself away from off the face of the earth, and before the beams of the sun enliven the earth with their rays. And so with the Christian's hope. He watches during the moral darkness of the world, till dawn; and just as the darkness is deepest, and is about to roll itself away before the beams of the "Sun of righteousness," his hope is rewarded in seeing the "morning star" (Rev. 22:16) in His earliest brightness, coming to take up His people to Himself, that they may shine forth with Him, as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:43), when He reveals Himself to the millennial earth as the "Sun of righteousness."

"I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.... He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.... Amen."

Moses

It has often been noticed, that the mixed multitude in verse 4 was the immediate cause of Israel's murmuring; but it should be remarked at the same time, that it is always a more ordinary thing to follow a bad example than a good one. In a similar case, Paul exhorts the saints to follow those who were walking at the head of the procession, and not to be looking back at the rear, to those who might very well be compared to the heterogeneous mixed multitude of Numbers 11. (See Phil. 3:17, etc.)

Moses in this chapter feels that the burden is too much for him, and ends his first discourse in verse 15 with "Kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand." He appears, all through the passage, as occupied with himself and his own resources. He felt himself unable to accomplish the task of leading the people through the wilderness. It is a very remarkable thing that the two grand figures of the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah, both begged to be allowed to die in peace. Death is a sovereign remedy for an energetic person whose task is too hard for him; and surely neither Moses nor Elijah were wanting in energy; but they had to learn that it was not their power or energy that could accomplish their tasks, though they never could have known what the great Apostle to the Gentiles speaks of in 2 Corinthians; that is, the power of the resurrection, and the full and perfect mistrust of all that is of the natural man.

The word "I" is found very frequently in Moses' speech's in this chapter; and when this (I, me) becomes the object of our thoughts, we generally find words to express them. Moses had said (Exod. 4:10), "I am not eloquent,... I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue"; but he becomes eloquent when "Moses" is the theme of his discourse (see verses 21 and 22 of the chapter before us); he finds the use of his tongue in describing his own difficulty, and that is natural to all men.

But the great and blessed lesson to be learned in this remarkable passage is the faithfulness of God while chastening His rebellious and lusting people, and the boundless resources of Jehovah in the wilderness when, to all appearance, everything had come to a dead stop, and the mere energy of man is proved to be of no value. Nothing could be more interesting to us at the present time, when the enlightened leaders, leaving God out of their calculations, assure us that it was physically impossible for Israel to cross the desert. and when many may be found following the mixed multitude in all manner of worldliness and self-seeking.

Moses lost a great privilege, but the same power was exercised by Jehovah, though He employed seventy other men; the power of the Spirit was distributed, but not increased. The answer to the question, "Have I conceived all this people?" (v. 12), is fully given by the Lord in His untiring patience in this wonderful passage.

But the application must be made to ourselves. It has often been shown, that in the first chapters of this book, a full and perfect provision is made by the Lord for the march of the whole camp across the wilderness, and that the most terrible failure occurs the moment the camp begins actually to move. The oft repeated story of failure after having been established in blessing by

God, is seen here, and may serve as an illustration of what has occurred in the Church of God upon earth from Pentecost up to the present time.

We may consider for a moment, without going back further in history, the actual state of things in the present day-the state of utter failure and weakness, and the unchanging grace and power of our God and Father in Jesus Christ whose goodness will never fail us to the end of the journey. "Is the LORD'S hand waxed short?" It became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings; and this blessed Leader never complains, as Moses did, of the weight of the charge He bears. The wilderness journey, for us, is drawing to its close; but we are still in the wilderness, and need to look up to Him at every moment; and He will not fail us.

The contrast between Moses and Paul has often been presented. Moses in verse 12 of this chapter asks if he, having brought forth the people, should be charged with the burden of them until the promised land be reached. Paul, on the contrary, in the epistle to the Galatians, was willing to suffer pangs afresh, in order that the saints might receive blessing and Christ be formed in them. We may well notice the perfect trust in the Lord in the Apostle, and the perfect mistrust of everything that is of man; and it is not going too far to assert, that Moses had not understood the end of man, of his efforts, his excellence, and his energy, in Numbers 11. He could not, as we have already noticed, say with Paul, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead." 2 Cor. 1:9.

If ever there were a day in which we need to look entirely to the Lord, and to Him alone, it is the day in which we live; and by faith we look up to Him, the Leader of our salvation, to Him whose arms were once extended upon the cross as He bare our sins, and who ever lives to lead us through every difficulty to the eternal glory. It may be said that the people of God are so dispersed, and many other things; but we know that His arm is not shortened. It may be a severe lesson to learn- that of mistrusting man, and our own selves most of all- but a blessed lesson after all; and we look toward Him in the excellent glory, and to the God of glory who has placed Him at His right hand, praying that we may glorify Him for the rest of the journey in the desert. May we be found walking in true dependence, prayerfully, and with true confidence in Him.

Moses' Loss of Canaan

Moses had his ordinary shepherd's rod in his hand when God called him to feed Israel (Ex. 4). It then became God's rod, for God made it the symbol and instrument of Moses' authority and grace in Israel. He was thenceforth to take it, that by it he might do his wonders in Egypt and in the wilderness, for judgment on the enemy, and for blessing on the people (v. 17).

It first swallowed up the rods of Egypt, to show that no strength could stand before God's strength, thus giving Egypt notice that it was hard to kick against the pricks (Exod. 7:12). But Egypt would not learn that lesson. And then the rod brings the plagues of blood, of frogs, and of lice, till the magicians own that they could not measure their strength with the Lord's (chap. 8:19). It was then used in the plagues of hail (chap. 9:23), locusts (chap. 10:13), and darkness (chap. 10:22), and finally for the destruction of the first-born as well as the deliverance of Israel, and for the overflow of Egypt in the Red Sea (chaps. 12-14).

Thus was it the instrument of judgment and of grace in Egypt. It was but a weak shepherd's rod at first, but as such it was the more fit to become God's rod; for He ever perfects His strength in our weakness, and chooses the weak things to confound the mighty.

But we are still to see the rod in the wilderness, for Moses opens the rock in Horeb with it (Exod. 17:5, 6). By the same Shepherd's strength and grace he now feeds the camp in the desert, as that by which He had redeemed them from bondage.

By all this use of the rod, Moses (and Aaron, his associate) should have been fully submitted to by all the congregation. The wonders they did (of which this rod was the symbol) had fully accredited them, and entire subjection to them as the king and the priest, or God's dignities, was the righteous place of the congregation. But it happens otherwise. The congregation despises these dignities, and are for setting aside this king and this priest of God (Numb. 16:3). That was a solemn moment in Israel. The rebellion of Korah and his companions was an awful consummation of despite of the Lord. But then the Lord pleads the cause Himself. He judges the offenders, and in a solemn trial of the question, He determines by the budding rod who His dignities or officers were, that the murmuring of the congregation might be silenced forever, and that they might thus be saved from death (Numb. 17:10).

Now we have much of the way of the Lord Jesus in all this. Jesus was set forth to Israel at the first as their shepherd. He did His wonders of grace and strength. His miracles and healings and teachings were enough to accredit Him, so that they owned for a season that this was He (Matt. 12:23). But Israel at length rose up against Him; they despised God's King and Priest, like Korah and his company, crucifying the Lord of glory. But God pleaded His cause against the nation by raising Him from the dead. Jesus brought forth in resurrection is the budding of the rod, the dead stick blooming blossoms and bearing almonds. Jesus in resurrection has all the virtue of this rod, both in silencing the murmur of every rival, and securing from death the soul that will trust in Him, and allow His claims. These two virtues of the resurrection are largely preached by the apostles.

The resurrection has made Jesus a Prince and a Savior. It has vindicated His claims and made Him the dispenser of life. By it God has fully declared that all power is Christ's, that He is the spring of life, and the executor of judgment. And the apostles were the preachers of resurrection in these its virtues, and the angel at the tomb so witnessed to it (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:36; 17:31; 3:13, 16; 5:31; 1:22; 4:10-12; Rom. 1:4). And now all blessing must flow through it, through this new rod, the budding rod, not Jesus as before, born of a virgin, but Jesus brought from the dead; not the rod that was first in Moses' hand, but the rod that was brought from before the Lord (Numb. 20:9; 18:7).

It is quite true that many, perhaps, at future seasons would not hear the voice of the budding rod, as now many will not hear the voice of the resurrection; but that does not alter the voice. Whether they will hear it or not, it silences murmurs -the budding rod and the resurrection have established those claims, for which Moses and Jesus the Son of God had been previously rejected and reproached.

This seems to me a simple following out of the history and the mystery of the rod. But then this also gives us the character of Moses' and Aaron's sin by which they forfeited the land.

God will be sanctified in them that come nigh Him (Lev. 10:3). He will have the provision which He has made, for either His own service or His people's blessing, honored by them. And the contrary of this was the sin of Nadab and Abihu. They took fire of their own, and did not use God's fire, the provision He had made for His own altar. Thus they did not sanctify Him. And this was the sin of Moses and Aaron here. They did not sanctify God in His ordinances of the budding rod. They did not use it according to God's mind about it. They did not give it its ordained place, or duly own its virtues before the congregation. They acted as they did before, striking instead of speaking. They did not know the power of this rod - using strength instead of preaching the virtue of it. Nor did they duly honor the grace of the rod, for in it God's grace had greatly abounded. In spite of all their sin in the matter of Korah, God had set up this other witness for His praise and their blessing. But Moses and Aaron act no more in full sympathy with the grace than they had with the power of the rod; for they upbraided the people as well as strike the rock, while they were told merely to speak to the rock, and to do nothing with the people, but bring them forth the water. Their conduct, therefore, was unbelief in the virtues of this mystic rod. It was unbelief in the present ordinance, and a return to previous dispensations. They forgot the lesson of Numbers 17 for a moment, and thus they forfeited the land.

Such was their sin, and such their judgment. And it is like present unbelief in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. For Christ risen is God's great ordinance now. The resurrection, as I have said, is the true budding rod. It is that ordinance which has the virtues of Aaron's rod in it. When the resurrection is not honored in its fullness of grace to sinners, and of glory to God, as that which silences every tongue that should rise against the holy claims of Jesus, and also hinders the death and feeds the life of the poor sinner that will trust in Him, God's ordinance is not honored, and then comes forfeiture of all blessing. For God must be honored in His ordinances, and sanctified in them that come nigh to Him.

Now to this I would just further add, that Saul of Tarsus offended against the resurrection. He was chief among those who killed the witness of it (Acts 8:1). But Saul was brought to know it, and by that knowledge to die himself, and to live to be the witness of a higher glory still, even of ascension

or heavenly glory. And so with Moses here. He offends against the budding rod, and loses Canaan, but afterward shines in the glory of the Church on the top of the hill (Matt. 17:3).

The Prophet Obadiah

The history of Edom throughout Scripture is one of much interest, as exhibiting the ways of God with a people akin to Israel, but with fortunes more and more diverging from the chosen people of God. We find first fraternal consideration, even in Obadiah - tenderness and yearning over brother Edom. The inevitable crisis comes, the judgment of the early sin, which becomes more and more pronounced, until at last patience would be a sanction of wickedness. At the same time in the history of Edom, we see thoroughly maintained the principle of moral responsibility which God never abandons, but holds inviolably true and sacred, as it is equally applicable to the enemies of God and to His friends. Nevertheless we find also what is necessary to bear in mind along with this - the sovereign wisdom of God, who from the first needed neither to learn anything of man on the one hand, or grounds to decide His will on the other. He exercised His own mind and purpose, even before the birth of the children of Isaac. It was so ordered that the character of the flesh should be manifest, not merely where there was wickedness in the family, but where there was faith.

Isaac stands out remarkable for piety, doubtless of a domestic and equable character in the retired calm of a godly household, as decidedly as Abraham does for a stronger and more self-renouncing communion with God. Abraham's faith was exercised in a field more varied and conspicuous. There was more of a public testimony in the man whom God deigned to call His friend. As Isaac was more retiring, so was he also apt to yield overmuch when tried. Himself the chosen heir to the setting aside of the bondmaid's son Ishmael, it was in his family, among the twin sons not merely of Isaac but of Rebekah, of the same father and the same mother, that God afresh exercised His sovereignty. Impossible to find greater closeness in point of circumstance. This therefore made it all the more striking when we find God even before their birth pronouncing on the ultimate and distinct destiny of the two sons.

As noticed in another place, if God had not been pleased to choose, it is evident that the two could not have exactly the same place. Was God then to abrogate His title? or to leave it to man with only Satan to influence? It was most fitting then that He should choose which was to have the superior place. Equality never abides, and they could not both be invested with firstborn rights. One must be chosen for the better place. The order either of flesh or of God's choice must prevail. Which is most right? Assuredly God, whatever may be His grace, maintains always His own sovereignty. He chose therefore Jacob the younger, and not Esau; for this could only have given importance to man in the flesh - man as he is in his fallen condition without God. Impossible that He should make light of the fall or of its consequences; He therefore chooses and acts.

At the same time it is remarkable that, while the first book of the Bible points out the choice of God from the beginning, He does not pronounce morally on Esau in a full, complete, and absolute way until the last book of the Old Testament. It is only in Malachi that He says, "Esau have I hated." I could concede nothing more dreadful than to say so in Genesis. Never does Scripture represent God as saying before the child was born and had manifested his iniquity and proud malice, "Esau

have I hated." There is where the mind of man is so false. It is not meant, however, that God's choice was determined by the character of the individuals. This were to make man the ruler rather than God. Not so; God's choice flows out of His own wisdom and nature. It suits and is worthy of Himself; but the reprobation of any man and of every unbeliever is never a question of the sovereignty of God. It is the choice of God to do good where and how He pleases; it is never the purpose of His will to hate any man. There is no such doctrine in the Bible. I hold therefore that, while election is a most clear and scriptural truth, the consequence that men draw from election; namely, the reprobation of the non-elect, is a mere reproduction of fatalism, common to some heathen and all Mohammedans, the unfounded deduction of man's reasoning in divine things.

But man's reasoning in the things of God, not being based on the divine revelations of His mind in His Word, is good for nothing, but essentially and invariably false. It is impossible for man to reason justly in the abstract as to the will of God. The only safe or becoming ground is to adhere to the simple exposition of His own declarations, and this for the very simple reason that a man must reason from his own mind; and his own mind is far indeed from being God's mind. Reasoning means deduction according to the necessary laws of the human mind. Here, however, the groundwork being the will of God, faith to reason aright must reason from what God is according to what He Himself says. The danger is of inferring from what man is and from what man feels. Such is the essential difference between what is trustworthy and what is worthless in questions of the kind. Man must submit to be judged by God and His Word, not to judge for Him. No man is competent to think or speak in His stead. But we may and ought to learn what He has told us of Himself and His ways in His Word.

Nor is there any serious difficulty, still less opposition, to what is here said, in the scriptural fact which is often brought up in discussing points like this - the hardening of Pharaoh. It can be readily shown that such a judicial dealing on God's part is unquestionably righteous. Scripture lets us see the proud, cruel, and blaspheming character of Pharaoh before the hardening; nor does it speak of the Lord hardening his heart till he had fully committed himself to self-will and contempt of God. But as to the thing thus expressed, I believe that it is a real infliction from God because of a rebellious opposition to His demands and authority. There may be such a dealing now with a man, but He never hardens him in the first instance that he should not believe; but after he has heard and has refused to believe, God seals him up in an obdurate state. In no instance, however, is this the first act of God, but rather the last, judicial and retributive, when he has slighted an adequate and faithfully rendered testimony.

Everyone's heart when simple bows instinctively to the truth of God. If unsophisticated (I do not say converted), we feel how righteous, wholesome, and good it all is. Anything that distorts or even ignores the revealed character and mind of God is false, and will always be found to issue in wrong deductions. But in general the fault does not so much consist in mistaken deductions from Scripture, as in human preconceptions and mere theorizing. There are Calvinistic speculations just as much as Arminian. It seems to me that both schemes are beyond question partial and do violence to the truth. The practical lesson is to cherish confidence only in God's Word. We may safely rest, as we are bound to rest, in His revelation. The best of men, those who help most in ministry, are liable to err; and we must beware lest merely changing names we fall into the old snare of tradition or confidence in man. Our own day presents no better security than another.

May we trust to God and the Word of His grace, which is able to build us up! Nothing else in the long run can preserve souls from illusion or falsehood. On the contrary, when men begin to presume, they go and lead wrong, no matter what their position may be. If this should be a just feeling in itself, it should be felt quite as strongly respecting ourselves as about others. Our only safety is in simple and implicit subjection to the Word of God. For this we need the guidance of the Spirit. But we are never sure of having the directing power of the Spirit with us, except the eye be single to Christ. Thus these three safeguards are always together where we are right; and unless they are all verified in us, there is no real deliverance from self, nor assurance of the mind and will of God. The attempt to use the Word of God without the teaching of the Spirit lands one in rationalism. The presumption to have the Spirit of God without the Word leads into fanaticism. But we need, in addition to both the Word and the Spirit, a bond (if I may so say) between them, in order to keep us firm and steady, yet dependent and humble; and this bond of attractive power which binds together both the Word and the Spirit of God is having our eye fixed upon Christ. Thus, instead of self (the real root of all mistake), Christ becomes our object - the second Man and not the first.

Such then, omitting the notice of the hardening of Pharaoh, is the early revelation as to Esau, himself the progenitor of the Edomites; but we have also the history pursued through Scripture. They early emerged into considerable strength and importance. Genesis 36 gives us the rise and progress of their national greatness, the line first of their dukes, as they are called, which would answer probably in modern language to the sheiks of their tribes; and then later of the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before there reigned any king over the sons of Israel. These kings we should, I presume, call emeers; that is, not in the absolute sense of a king perhaps, but rather of a chief for common purposes; for among these sons of Edom there was a great deal of independence, considering that they were orientals. Indeed it is so still in the kindred children of the desert.

Although the emeer may have considerable rights and privileges, the under-chiefs reserve not a little independence for themselves. These various stages of polity were both developed in the early history of Edom. They had dukes and even kings flourishing in their midst when the children of Israel as a whole were obscure and unsettled. They had even their regular line of kings - as we know with a certainty from a verse of great interest which furnishes rationalism a fresh occasion for exposing its ignorant and self-sufficient unbelief, long before the children of Israel called Saul to the throne; nay, I should judge, before they emerged from the wilderness. I suspect, without being positive respecting the matter, that it was the sojourning of Israel in the wilderness, which was about the epoch of change from their having simply dukes, as they are called in Scripture, to their having kings. My reason for this, that while in Exodus 15 we hear of the dukes of Edom being amazed, in Numbers 21 we read of the king of Edom who would not permit the children of Israel to pass through his land. Although they promised not to drink of their waters, or touch their fruit without paying for it, he refused absolutely and churlishly, this favor, of no cost to himself, but of moment to the people of God. It would appear, therefore, that at the entrance of Israel upon the wilderness, there was still the old condition of a number of independent chiefs; but before they left the wilderness, kings in rapid succession reigned, as well might be at such a time and state of things.

But however this might be judged, the approach of the sons of Israel brought the feelings of the Edomites to a head. It is always so. Nobody knows himself till he comes into contact with what is of God. It is the true and crucial test for the soul. Hence Christ is the perfect criterion as well as standard, because He only is the perfect manifestation of God. He is God, but then He is God in man; and therefore, coming down to us, living, speaking, acting, suffering in our midst, He becomes the most complete, and indeed absolute, test of human nature. As the true light He made manifest every soul He came across. And so it is to this day, although He be not here below. Assuredly He is in heaven; but the proclamation of His name and truth has the same substantial effect as His presence when here below, if not even greater, because now there is proclaimed in the gospel the weightiest conceivable addition to the power of His Person in the efficacy of His work. Alas! human nature is stumbled by both.

It is an offense to man to find somebody who is a man, and the lowliest of men, yet infinitely greater than Adam and all his other sons - someone that man never can match or even approach, who, at the same time, condescends in grace to the vilest and the worst to pity and save them by faith. Now there is nothing more trying to man's mind than such condescension, especially from one he has wronged, because it just tells him how worthless, guilty, and ruined he is himself. Consequently the saving grace of God is incomparably more offensive in Christ than if He had been a lawgiver like Moses, because this at any rate would have left some scope for man's ability, for his reason, and for his merits; but to be treated as nothing save a sinner is the greatest possible offense, which consequently the cross of Christ does not fail to entail without disguise before man, because it is the fullest manifestation of human worthlessness on one side, and of God's grace on the other.

So it was in measure, though certainly ill-represented, in Israel as the object of God's choice before Edom and his children. These might have been ever so decent individually - probably, as a rule, far from being as dark and depraved as their Canaanitish neighbors - but when the destiny of Israel began to dawn, the enmity of their hearts came out fully. Although nothing could be more respectful and upright than the overtures of Moses and the children of Israel, the hatred of the Edomites became quite unmistakable.

They would listen to nothing but the malignant and proud suggestions of their own hearts. God shows His character in the most admirable manner. According to His will the people turn back, called though they were by His decree to be the first of nations in this world. They take the unprovoked insult of their brother Edom with quietness, and this at the express command of God who would teach His people patience.

It is always good for those who may ere long wield power to learn the exercise of patience. But did not God in this tell out, as far as it went, what He is in so directing and training His people? They turn back, meekly accepting the insolence of their relatives, and quietly abide by the guidance of Jehovah who was slighted in their slight. But even more than that, they were admonished to cherish the most friendly feelings toward these Edomites, a command incorporated into the substance of the law. Whatever might be the exclusion of others, from the book of Deuteronomy we find it expressly laid down that an Edomite was to enter the congregation of Jehovah after the third generation. An unusual license this, if one may so call it, and a peculiar privilege in itself; but how striking that it should be extended of all others to those who had taken such decided ground

in contempt of their kinsmanship with Israel as these sons of Edom. (There was similarly a command not to abhor an Egyptian, which natural feeling would be prompt to do through a proud remembrance of Israel's former abasement and suffering in the land of their old bondage. God would have them cultivate generous, not vindictive, recollections.) All this seems the more instructive, because in the case of an Ammonite or Moabite entrance was refused until the tenth generation. Such is the true God; none but He would have thought of such a course; only Himself would have enjoined it on His people, for it was what became such as love His name to feel and act on.

But there is another principle. The greater the patience of God, the worse man behaves in presence of His goodness and patience, so much the more tremendous must be the judgment when it comes. This we may read in the ultimate history of Edom. Doubtless there are many in these days of unbelief who fancy that Edom is done with; and assuredly it would be difficult for any ethnologist to trace out satisfactorily where and who the Edomites are just now, and for many centuries before our day. When we talk of difficulties, we must remember whose they really are. Beyond controversy, if it be a question of man, enormous obstacles are in the way; but it is outside our measure, and belongs simply to God and His Word. I therefore stand to it in the most deliberate and distinct way that the Edomite is not extinct - that he remains under other names impossible for man to trace now. But there is another and connected fact, equally wonderful but more commonly acknowledged. The ancient people of God, the twelve tribes of Israel, are yet to emerge as a whole.

Thus therefore it is according to the analogy of the divine dealings with His people that He should also summon their enemies to come forth.

Hence at the same critical moment when God causes the chosen nation to emerge from the dust of ages, wherein they had lain buried and for the greater part unknown, He will also remove the veil which as yet conceals among others that kindred Edomite race with their undying hatred against the sons of Israel. The great and final conflict of the age will then ensue without further delay. Such, beyond a doubt, is the representation of the prophets; and them I believe, not present appearances or the hopes and fears of men.

The Old Prophet of Bethel

1 Kings 13

This chapter ushers in a solemn scene in Israel's history. What a contrast between the time when the people "blessed the king, and went into their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David His servant, and for Israel His people" (chap. 8:66); and a now divided kingdom-one tribe only left to Judah-that Jehovah might still have a light before Him in Jerusalem (chap. 11:36). But worse than that, lest old associations should prove too strong, the powerful links of a common worship must be broken; something new must be established, not in opposition, but as a substitute. How artful the enemy! There is no attempt made to deny God or His power in dealing with man in past times; that was too manifest a thing, and would have offended the consciences of all; a counterfeit must be established - something that will do as well-thus expediency, ever Satan's way, comes in. "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem." Dan and Bethel are nearer, why not worship there? Once off God's line, how low the fall! Instead of a temple overlaid with gold, built of "costly stones, even great stones," the glory of the Lord filling the house, and priests, the sons of Levi, ministering-

"O man, how hast thou proved

What in thy heart is found."

Two calves of gold are set up, with priests "of the lowest of the people." What a picture! But it speaks to us - these things are our ensample. "The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), has now become, as far as its outward position and character in the world, no better than Israel with their false altar, calves, and priesthood.

But God, ever faithful to His people, never grows weary. A prophet appears on the scene to testify against this wickedness, and tell of approaching judgment. He is sent by the word of the Lord to witness against the dreadful evil of Israel's position; but, once his message was given, he was to eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the way he came. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them," is ever the mind of God for those who would bear witness for Him.

We have described, by God Himself, the state of things around us. That which was once set up in such beauty in the earth, to be as rivers of living waters (John 7) in a barren and a thirsty land, soon left its first estate, and became but a great house, filled with vessels - some to honor, some to dishonor. How are those who would be for God in the midst of it all to act? And who is a "man of God" but one who is standing for Him and His truth in the midst of that which has proved unfaithful to Him? "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor." "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness," etc. "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." If the moral state of Israel was akin to that of the present day, "a form of godliness, but denying the power

thereof," the call to the man of God is similar, and we should do well to lay to heart -- 1) whether we have taken this place; 2) having taken it, are we living and walking in the power of it?

We would all like to be thought men of God; having in some little measure given up the world as far as outward things are concerned, there still remains a desire to be something, or to think oneself somebody, or to be thought of by others. Is not this the case? But to be indeed for Him requires a total denial of the flesh-there is no room for it. God's word is imperative, if we would stand for Him. It will involve a breaking with all that man and nature holds dear; there can be no bearing with an evil while God's testimony declares that it cannot be borne with.

The prophet had a message to deliver, a testimony to make known. Yet, still to be separate, neither eat nor drink, nor return the way by which he came; as long as it was a question of refusing the king, one openly ungodly, he is decided enough; there could be no doubt as to his course in such a case. How could he accept his invitation, how eat and drink with him?

But that is not all; such an invitation did not thoroughly test the heart-his conscience would have rebelled against so flagrant an act. Is he prepared to stand by God's word at all costs, at the risk of offending a brother prophet, to allow nothing whatever to interfere with what God at first told him? Such is the only right course - God "cannot deny Himself." "Try the spirits whether they are of God." He who is unfaithful in his testimony will ever endeavor to have others-especially those whom God may be using as a testimony for Himself and His truth - to sanction his course. It was the case here.

"There dwelt an old prophet in Bethel," in the midst of apostate Israel, where a calf was substituted for the temple; there a prophet of God was found. It was a solemn place to be in - conscience gone, and the only desire to have others, whom God was using, to accredit him, and become mixed up with the corruptions, and sanction his place in its midst. Well may the Apostle say, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." His soul was deadened by the corruptions around, insensible to truth- to all that a godly soul would hold precious. He hesitates not at a lie in order to conform the man of God to his ways. Once the soul allows the thinnest leaf, as it were, between himself and God, how soon it gives up all trust and dependence upon Him. It is off the ground of implicit subjection to His Word, and on that of expediency, a ground pleasing to man, but where the soul is at the mercy of all the craft and subtleties of Satan. There is no saying then the depths to which it may fall. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.... He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." It was so here- "God is not mocked." The man of God, who should have taken God's part, destroys his testimony by leaving the path in which he had been set, sooner than refuse a brother prophet; he sacrifices the word of God, and judgment follows, as it ever will, surely, quickly, suddenly. No after influence can ever call in question what God has made known to us as His will. "To obey is better than sacrifice," "My grace is sufficient for thee." No allowance can be made; the will of God is peremptory in these matters.

May we thus deal with ourselves, learning to refuse the evil and choose the good. It is a plain and simple path to those who will do so. "If... thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Expediency - circumstances -friends-brethren-all vanish away when Christ, and Christ alone, is the one Object before the heart. He will be as a lamp to our feet, a light to our path; He will make our way plain and clear, with no shadow of turning in our course, as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

Picture of a Life

How are you painting it? For the light of time or eternity, for God's eye or man's, for heaven or for earth? Some time ago, I stood before a masterpiece of Landseer's, representing a shaggy mountain pony lying on the grass. I examined it closely, and it appeared nothing but a mass of the roughest daubs and washes. On retiring about twenty feet, the daubs and washes all disappeared, and the effect was perfect; the rough hair actually seemed to stand out from the pony's back, so lifelike was the picture. It is therefore most important to look at a painting from the right distance.

If I order a work from an artist, he must know whether it is a fine cabinet picture that will bear the closest scrutiny, or a large painting for a gallery that is wanted. In the one case he will paint in every detail most carefully and minutely; in the other he will lay on his colors boldly and broadly, for effect from a distance.

Now for the application. We are each filling in the canvas of our lives, and as soon as the picture is completed it will be passed in review before the judgment seat of Christ before it is hung in the courts above. By the light of that throne it will be examined closely, stroke by stroke, nothing will escape.

Many a Christian's life makes a very satisfactory picture before his fellow men, that will look, alas, sadly different on that great day before the throne.

Paul felt all this, and painted his picture for God, not for man. "We are made manifest unto God," "but with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you... but He that judgeth me is the Lord." (2 Cor. 5:11; 1 Cor. 4:3, 4.) Such words as these tell us of the light in which the artist worked, and the eye for which he painted.

A man must paint his picture in the light in which it is to be shown. If it is to be viewed by day, it must be painted by day; if by artificial light, it must be painted by night; and if our life picture is to be viewed by God, it must be painted in the light of His presence. Do we not all work too much in the light of man's day for present praise from one another?

If we live for man's approval, we shall probably get it, and the applause and esteem we covet will be ours; but, remember those solemn words, thrice repeated by the Lord when speaking of the Pharisees of old: "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward"; and the sentence pronounced upon all who thus seek the praise of men, "Ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 6:1, 2, 5, 16.)

Face the question, beloved reader. You must paint your picture for time or eternity; which then will you work for? Oh seek, as you cover the daily portion of your life's canvas, to lay on every stroke in the light of the coming judgment seat; or, better still, let God guide the brush, and move and direct it as He will; for only if He works in you "to will and to do of His good pleasure," will your life meet His approval.

Nothing but the work of God will suit the eye of God. Even in natural things, man's most perfect work is full of flaws. None that have ever seen under the microscope the finest fabric that can be produced, compared with such an object as a butterfly's wing (where the very grains of dust are seen to be rows of the most beautiful miniature feathers, each one hanging from a crystal peg), can ever forget the difference between the works of man and of God. Let one thing be understood, you may paint your picture to suit man's present night or God's eternal day; but you cannot paint for both.

One solemn thought remains. We do not know the size of our canvas. Yours may be nearly covered, and you know it not. Oh, seek then from this day to live and walk and work for the eye of God alone, that there may be at least some strokes that will stand the light of the judgment seat of Christ. The truly spiritual eye will discern your object, and approve of it; and your eternal reward will be sure.

What a time of surprise that day will be! A man's name may be on the lips of thousands as he began painting his life picture for popularity. Discovering his mistake in time (it may be), he finished his life for the eye of God. What a picture that will be in heaven! One half all daubs and colors that will not stand the light, and the other (unheard of by man) radiant with the beauty of Christ that will all be shown out there. Oh, may this little article wake up every reader to live for God and for eternity in His fear and for His praise alone.

The Proverbs: Chapter 20:1-21:8

Here are brought together the great danger of certain follies on the one hand, and the value of wisdom and fidelity on the other.

There is no creature of God which has not an important place if used aright. But men blind to His will seek their pleasure heedlessly, and are thus enticed to open sin and grievous hurt. This is eminently the case with wine and strong drink; the one deceives, the other maddens. The warnings are so many and evident on every side, that such as err thereby have only to blame their own folly and self-will.

Rulers are not a terror to good work but to the evil. Nor does the king bear the sword in vain. He is ordained as God's servant, an avenger for wrath to him that does evil. The terror he inspires is therefore as a lion's roar. To provoke his anger is to sin against one's own soul. That again is sheer folly and wrong. Would you then have no fear of an authority so able to punish? Do that which is good, and you shall have praise from it.

Nor is there a more common snare than meddling where we have no business or duty. To this the self-sufficient are prone. Their vanity leads them to accredit others with failure, and themselves with wisdom. They are the men of common sense and of righteousness, if others are more brilliant. Hence in their folly they rush into that strife from which the right-minded hold aloof to their honor.

But there is also danger from one's own slothfulness, which is exemplified in its paralyzing the ordinary call to labor. It is ordered of God as the rule that plowing time should not be when things grow, and still less when they ripen. But a sluggard finds an excuse for putting off his duty in the cold weather which invites him to strenuous industry. Does he plead the winter against plowing? Then shall he beg in harvest and have nothing.

If there be thus from laziness danger of neglect in the proper season, and from officious vanity whenever a thorny question arises, it all goes to show the worth of intelligence, and the need of taking pains in order to arrive at it. For the truly wise are not superficial; but counsel in their heart is "deep water," instead of bubbling over on every occasion, however slight. And few things mark a man of understanding more than discerning ability to draw it out.

It is the common failing of men to affect a world-wide benevolence, and to cheat themselves into the belief that their talk and tears over the widow and the orphan are real kindness of no ordinary sort. Let us beware of walking in so vain a show, and remember that the Word of God raises the question whether the reality is in deed and truth. "A faithful man who shall find?"

Such souls however there are in a world where faith is rare, and most love glory from men rather than glory from God, though the one be as evanescent as it is vain, and the other as everlasting as it is substantial. "The righteous walketh in his integrity: blessed [are] his children after him." God is a rewarder of them that seek Him out; nor is it only the blessing of a good conscience in his walk;

but God does not forget his children after him. So even King David could not but feel toward Chimham, if Barzillai sought nothing for himself.

In verses 8-14 we have maxims laid down from the king on his throne down to the commonest trickery of life in everyday transactions, with moral cautions salutary to all.

If ever there was a king sitting on the throne, whose eyes in large measure scattered away all evil, it was he who wrote these words in the Spirit. Yet we have the sad tale of failure, so characteristic of man, and his eyes at length sanctioning evil most dishonoring to Jehovah and destructive to Israel. But He that inspired Solomon has ever a greater in view. "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." The time hastens.

Righteous souls may and do meanwhile groan; but they murmur not, still less resist the power, which is God's ordinance, nor plead conscience to evade law, but contrariwise are willing to suffer in obeying God. They know what man's state is, and that none can truly say, I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin. Their boast is in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they now received the reconciliation.

But there is no excuse for cheating; against which high and low, poor and rich, yea, and dishonest no less than honest, exclaim loudly. What is more than all, such deliberate roguery is an abomination to Jehovah, who is infinitely removed from all selfish feeling.

Evil may for a time be hidden under many a plea or cloak. But good needs no commendation. Even a child is known by his doings; a pure or a right work is plain.

The hearing ear is a wonderfully beneficent mechanism, the seeing eye of still wider scope for the race in matters of this life. How humbling is the unbelief of the would-be wise who try to persuade themselves and others that Jehovah made neither! Even a heathen like Galen felt and confessed that the hand which made them was divine. If Gnosticism is impious pride, Agnosticism is man sinking to the brute, yet boastful withal.

If man has no heart to thank God for his rest by night, and to seek His guidance and blessing by day, the very sun that performs His bidding calls man to go forth to his work till the evening, as much as he chases the beasts of the forest into their dens. To be an idler, a sleeper, during the hours of light, is to court poverty. To open one's eyes fittingly; that is, for work, is to be satisfied with bread. None needs to beg if in earnest.

How low is the effort to deceive the seller by depreciation! How false to boast of the mean advantage, if it succeed (v. 14)! But such are the ways of covetousness, as common a snare as can be found for the heart of man, and most hateful to the God of all grace.

In verses 15-23 we are shown what is of real value, far beyond gold, the object of most men, and rubies, the desired prize of rich folk.

Never was there a day in the world's annals when men might more easily possess themselves of gold than when Solomon reigned, never one when precious stones so freely poured than then into Jerusalem. But knowledge duly expressed was far rarer and yet more valuable; and so it is still.

Inconsiderateness is a direct road to ruin, even if one listens to spendthrifts of one's family. But what happens when a man is so weak as to become surety for a stranger? Yet worse is it, when he listens to a strange woman. You may relieve him of his raiment at once.

Again, if one eat the bread of deceit, and instead of trembling at the sin, find it sweet, what will the end be? Surely to fill the mouth with gravel; God is not mocked.

Counsel is requisite to form and execute a purpose, and especially if one go to war. But if one needs wise guidance, what more dangerous than to listen to an active talebearer, unless it be to a flatterer?

To honor one's parents was the first commandment with promise; what can be the issue but deepest darkness to him that curses either?

So too the hastily gotten inheritance is apt to slip soon, having no blessing from God.

But it is a dangerous thing to keep a grudge, and hope to repay it. God is jealous, but withal gracious. On Him let one wait and prove His saving mercy, as David did.

Cheating is His abomination, and a balance of deceit is not good, but for destruction.

It is very certain that dependence on God alone secures a clean or righteous walk. So it was of old; so it is now. Man needs direction from above, and grace too, that in this world of pitfalls and confusion his ways may please the Lord. This is most impressively pointed out in verses 24-30.

It is not a weak one's goings but a strong man's which are here said to be from Jehovah; how blessed, as well as necessary, to know Him who knows the end from the beginning, to whom the night shines as the day, and the darkness is as the light! Him faith can count on to direct the steps.

Jephthah was rash in the vow he made, but he stood to it and bore the consequence. Not so Ananias and Sapphira; but their deception did not shield them from death. We are bound to weigh seriously what we say before God, and not to retract for selfish reasons.

A wise ruler is not one who is too amiable to punish the wicked. The very aim and reason of his office is to be God's minister in externals, and a terror not to a good work, but to an evil one. It is the more imperative, if men conspire, to scatter them and crush their power fearlessly.

Man's spirit is Jehovah's lamp, and so, far beyond that of a beast that goes downward. But it is going beyond Scripture to boast of the great soul of man, and against Scripture to say that it is the light which lighteth every man. For this is Christ alone; and the real meaning of John 1:9 is, that the True Light is that which, coming into the world, lightens, or sheds light on, every man. It had been another state before He came thus. The Incarnate Word so deals with every man, high or low, Jew or Gentile. Conscience is a solemn inward monitor for God against sin. Christ when He came did incomparably more- made everyone and thing manifest in due character. Divines for ages are apt to talk like the Friends or the heathen; how little they have learned Christ!

Here again we learn that the king is preserved, not by inflexible firmness against the wicked, but by "mercy and truth." Negative qualities fail to sustain. "His throne is upholden by mercy"-a godlike prerogative. He needs love as well as fear, not only for the people's happiness, but for the stability of his rule.

It is folly and blindness to set young against old, instead of helping them to profit by an experience of great value which they lack. Let the old admire the energy of the young, and the young fail not to own the beauty of the gray head.

Stripes that wound, we all need from time to time, for nothing less probes and cleanses the hidden evil that is at work. The deeper the mischief, the more painful the corrective that must pierce to its core. Such a chastening is not pleasant, but causes grief. Afterward it yields peaceful fruit of righteousness to those exercised thereby.

In Jehovah's hand is here (chap. 21:1-8) shown to be the heart, whether of the highest or of the least; then what pleases and displeases Him, with the issues, for the evil or for the good.

Of all men a king's heart from his position and duty might instinctively seem reserved and inflexible; but who resisteth Him that secretly rules as He will, even in the worst of circumstances? He will reign righteously and for the largest blessing, when the world kingdom is taken. But even now the king's heart is in His hand whom he may not know, or disdain. Little as he thinks it, he subserves Him, as brooks of water the man who controls every rill for his gardens, his vineyards, or his fields. It is turned as He pleases.

It is natural to man as he is to count right every way of his; but the solemn truth for everyone is that Jehovah weighs not the acts only, but the heart. All things are naked and laid bare to His eyes with whom we have to do; let us never forget it.

Unless men be reprobate, they are apt to be religious after a sort and a measure; and their sacrifices are a resource too often for indulgence in sin. The sacrifice to God who gave Christ to suffer for our sins is a wholly different matter, the resting place of faith, and the start of holiness. To do judgment and justice flows from it, and is indeed acceptable to God if with faith; as sacrifice without faith is nauseous and presumptuous.

Haughty eyes, and a proud heart, how abhorrent to God and unbecoming in man! It is sin unequivocally; the tillage of the wicked, their business or their glory; their lamp or sinful field. The meek shall inherit the earth; Christ's time is their time. The present is the evil age.

Diligence, directed by thought or plan, tends to plenteousness, as haste destines everyone that so acts only to want; for haste leads to mistake, and mistake to loss, and loss to ruin.

On the other hand, the getting of treasure by a tongue of falsehood, even if it succeed for a while, as it may, ends in worse ruin, like the fleeting breath of those that seek death, happy neither here nor hereafter. Truly they seek death without knowing it.

Others, who are bolder than to deceive, resort to robbery in their wickedness; because they refuse to do judgment, their end is destruction. It will drag or sweep them away whence is no return. Christ is the only true and safe way; and we can now say He, the Son, is the way to the Father.

The guilty man's way is not evil only, but perverse or strange; for he does not stick at anything. The pure man, on the contrary, is upright in his work, carrying conscience with it, and pleasing God. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.

The Proverbs: Chapter 21:9-22:14

Chapter 21:9-22:14

Next we have the vivid sketch of one who has to do with a helpmate whose willful temper is the source of continual chagrin and shame. Yet the word of wisdom gives good counsel to relieve and comfort, notwithstanding such a calamity.

A contentious woman is of necessity a trial to every member of the household, but most of all to her husband. The house may be roomy, but only jars follow her; and if visitors call, it is but to increase his pain. No better place is there for him than to find a corner in the housetop; there can quiet be found, and, for piety, access to the Highest.

The soul is the living man's center; it is himself, the seat of his will. If this be unrenewed by grace, and therefore under the enemy's dominion, he has pleasure in evil, not only himself doing things worthy of death, but enjoying the evil of others. What room is there in such a heart for loving another, whatever his need or distress? There is no favor in his eyes, even for the nearest neighbor.

The scorner has not only no respect for what is excellent, but affects to despise it and actively hates it. When such a one meets an exemplary retribution, it is a wholesome lesson to the simple who takes warning against that wicked way. But the wise, when he is instructed, receives positive knowledge for good.

So again the righteous is not merely grieved at the house of the wicked but considers it to solemn profit. And no wonder; for the wicked are overthrown to ruin, even in this world.

Then the world is full of want, suffering, and misery. Is anyone disposed to stop his ears at the cry of the poor? God is not mocked, but resents hardness of heart; for "he also shall cry, and shall not be heard."

On the other hand, even the angry are not insensible to a gift if it be in secret. It would be resented if others saw or knew, or if the donor were prominent, or talked. It is not only bad men whose anger is thereby pacified. See the effect on David when Abigail brought to his bosom a reward that exercised his conscience.

To the righteous, it is their life and joy to do what is right, as it is a great sorrow when through any lack of care they may fail. But nothing is so uncongenial to the workers of iniquity, ever in quest of gain through wrong. And destruction must be their portion. For there is not a creature unapparent before God, but all things are naked and laid bare to His eyes.

In verses 16-23, a cluster of observations are found, of divine value for warning and wisdom in practical life.

The goodness of God leads to repentance, and the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom. Christ attracts the heart, the one Mediator between God and men. He is the way, the truth, and the

life, always the Object of faith to the believer. Here is the way of wisdom, and the man that wanders out of that way shall abide in the congregation of the dead, far from God (v. 16).

Next, we have the man that, loving mirth or pleasure, and wasting life's time and work in that vain pursuit, must pay the penalty of indigence. Just so he that devotes himself to wine and oil, or enjoyable living, cannot acquire wealth for any worthy or legitimate end (v. 17). Present indulgence forbids future profit.

Then a still more pronounced character comes before us- a wicked person as such. Even in the then and present evil age, when the divine government is not yet in manifested power, who but the blind can fail to see in the downfall of the wicked a ransom for the righteous from destruction, and the transgressor laid in the pit he dug for the upright? Everyone acquainted with Scripture will remember how its history teems with such proofs. But outside its range, and in rather modern times (little beyond two centuries ago), take the return of the cruelly banished Waldenses, who were enabled to make their way back to their fatherland, few in number and with no external military aid, against French and Italian armies of disciplined soldiers, against the Pope, the priesthood, their Romanist countrymen, and even their own sovereign of Savoy, till he was ashamed to destroy the bravest and most loyal of his own subjects. Not that I for one defend fighting for rights; but God pities the oppressed that cry to Him, even if mistaken like most of their fellow-Christians (v. 18).

Further, we hear of the sad hindrance to peace and comfort in the home from the presence of a contentious and irritable woman. Who has not seen the misery of having to do with such a one presiding? To dwell with a termagant of this kind is worse than living in a desert land (v. 19).

Next, we are told of what is good and wise, and the advantages which ensue. The wise, as the rule, lack no good thing, even in their earthly dwelling; for they aspire not nor covet, contrary to wisdom and the fear of Jehovah. The foolish live in ease, and swallow all up; and who is to blame but themselves (v. 20)?

Again, he that pursues righteousness and mercy (that is, faithfulness in relation to Jehovah and to mankind according to their true place, as well as kindness also), finds "life, righteousness, and honor" - his own at compound interest. "His own," did I say? say rather God's excellent gift. For none can so walk without faith in God and pleasing Him (v. 21).

Nor is it only that the dwelling of the wise has a desirable treasure therein; but if danger threaten, a wise man surmounts all opposed - scales the city of the mighty, and cuts down the strength of the confidence thereof. What can force avail against wisdom (v. 22)?

Moreover, valuable a faculty as good speech is, it is wise to spare the tongue as well as the mouth. The time, the tone, the way, and the end, have all to be considered, lest a fair intention might not only fail, but provoke. As the mouth has to beware of taking in beyond what is right and good, so the tongue of letting out what is not edifying. To keep one's mouth and tongue as in God's presence is to keep the soul from troubles without end (v. 23).

We have seen that "slow to speak" is a safeguard against troubles; we now hear how evil it is to be swift to wrath and its expression (vv. 24-31). How many are the evils of humanity as it is!

If self-control in speech protects from many a trouble, how different is the scorner's lot and reputation! For pride and arrogance can brook no difference-haughty to superiors and disdainful where they can dare it. O what a blessed relief to learn of Him who was meek and lowly in heart! Yet He was the Son of the Highest, who bowed absolutely to His will, when despised, rejected, and loathed of men. "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight"!

Honest labor has its duty, its interests, and its satisfaction. Sloth, which shirks from the work of the hands, leaves all the more room for carking care, because of its fruitless desires, disappointed even to death.

The empty longing fills the day, in vain for the man himself and everyone else. The righteous on the contrary, with a conscience exercised in the duties of his relationship, has the means through his diligence to open both heart and hand ungrudgingly to the need around him.

Jehovah has respect to the person before his offering. If it be a wicked person, how could his sacrifice be other than an abomination? So in Isa. 66:1-4 we read of the apostate Jews in the latter day; they may trust in the temple they build, where once the Lord of glory filled it; they may sacrifice a lamb, and offer an oblation, and present a memorial of incense; but they are no better than a dog's neck or swine's blood, or blessing an idol, in His eyes who looks for and to the afflicted and contrite that tremble at His word. Worse still it is to bring a sacrifice with wicked aim, as superstition does.

Witness-bearing is the more solemn, because done with deliberate purpose, and before God avowedly as well as man. To be false thus is indeed ruinous; but to hear the call and speak the truth is to honor God and serve man, and such a one speaks unchallenged and abidingly.

A wicked man has no shame; he acts and speaks with no restraint. Not so the upright, who looks up for the direction of his way, and considers well his steps.

No axiom so sure as that every claim to wisdom, understanding, or counsel against Jehovah, is utter folly. Only destruction can be the end of such a policy.

And vain it is to trust in ordinary means without Him. The horse may be prepared for the battle, but the victory is with neither the rider nor his horse. Deliverance is of Jehovah.

Even in a day when Israel was under probation and the earthly government of Jehovah with present results for good or ill, there could not but be the working of great moral principles in those that feared His name, far beyond what the natural man covets.

It is usual to supply the word "good" in the version of the opening clause of the 22nd chapter. But this is so necessarily implied as to seem needless. For who could suppose that a false pretension is of any value? One's name in Scripture is the manifestation of what one is; the object of the heart determines the character; and here it is supposed to be what is excellent in God's eyes as well as man's. Hence, loving favor accompanies it, which is far from due to silver and gold, often the portion of the worthless.

In the essentials, how little is the difference! Alike they come into the world, and alike they stand when the world passes away. "Rich and poor meet together; Jehovah is the maker of them all." This the poor man is entitled to remember, and the rich man ought not to forget. Job had it

distinctly before him: "If I despised the cause of my bondman or of my bondmaid, when they contended with me, what then should I do when God riseth up? and if he visited, what should I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?"

The value of prudence in a world like this is next urged. The circumspect sees the evil and seeks timely shelter; the heedless goes boldly forward and suffers the consequence.

Humility of a true sort, the fear of Jehovah, has its reward in riches and honor and life, which greater ability misses for the lack of it.

The crooked or perverse man finds painful experience on his way, thorns, snares; whereas he that guards his soul keeps aloof from all such trials.

Early training, whatever the exceptions, has its good result. Train up the lad according to his course; and when he is old, he will not depart from it. So it was with Isaac thus trained by his father. Solomon's course was a much more checkered one, though we may hope there was repentance.

It is a difficult thing for a man of money to avoid airs with him that has none, and particularly if the latter puts himself under obligation to him. But faith delivers from this snare, and still more when there is a real living Christ.

In verses 8-14 we have an alternating series of characteristics to strive against or to cherish, with only evils following, which call for our attention.

To begin with here, injustice is to end with mischief and disappointment; yet if this sours the temper and leads to wrath, its effect is neither great nor long. It is the Old Testament analogue to Gal. 6:7, 8: "Be not deceived. God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life eternal."

The bountiful eye, on the contrary, does not wait for the appeals of want, but looks out for it in this world of disorder and distress; and his hand and heart go with the good will of his eye, for he giveth of his bread to the poor. And such a one is and shall be blessed.

The scorner is not only ungodly and a sinner, but a source of mischief where he enters. Would you have contention to disappear, you must get rid of his presence; for it surely brings strife and shame along with it.

How different with a man who joins love of a pure heart to grace on his lips! He is a treasure, not only in private but for public complications. The king seeks such a one for his friend. It is the combination that is so rare.

Even in a world of deception, before the king shall reign in righteousness, when eyes are dim and ears dull, where the vile is called liberal and the churl bountiful, the eyes of Jehovah preserve knowledge, which otherwise would perish from the earth; and He overthrows the words of the treacherous, were they as high as Haman in the eyes of Ahasuerus.

Again, the sluggard who likes to lie abed says in his foolish fancy, A lion is without. I shall be killed in the streets! He is blind to the worst enemy that besets his chamber and enchains his soul.

But the mouth of strange women is yet more dangerous to the unwary, " a deep ditch" for such as yield to her snares. He who falls therein is apt to sink indeed to utter ruin; or, in the energetic phrase of this book, he is one against whom Jehovah hath indignation.

The Proverbs: Chapter 22:15-23:18

Chapter 22:15-23:18

These brief moral axioms here (vv. 15-21) close with the following pair - the thoughtless child, and the calculating adult-which we do well to lay to heart.

It is a sure and solemn thing that folly is no calamity from without, but bound in the heart, and this not only when in the conflicts of busy life, but from our early days, departed as all now are from God by nature. "Folly is bound in the heart of a child"; exemption there is none from the most tender age. Nor does the utmost love or care adequately restrain folly. There is the rod of correction to drive it far away by Jehovah's prescription and with His blessing. It is the folly of a father or mother to think their way better than God's.

With the grownup another snare is too common: to oppress the poor in any form of increasing one's means-very especially to commend oneself to the rich by gifts they do not need. God's eye is on this folly too; and such "come to want" as such selfishness deserves.

To give heed to the words of the wise is itself a wise thing -to apply the heart as well as the ear to such as know better than ourselves. How sad the self-sufficiency that doubts it!

These words, if kept within, give satisfaction and pleasure; whereas all else palls and becomes distasteful, if not a shame. Nor is this all. They contribute to our own growth and the help of others by the help they render and the confidence they inspire. Thus do they become "together fitted to thy lips."

But there is a better effect still, "that thy trust may be in Jehovah." Therefore are such words made known, for who otherwise is sufficient for them? and what good is there that we have not received? Surely we do well to mark precisely the debt of each of us, "this day, even to thee."

Further, let us not overlook the enhanced value of "excellent things in counsels and knowledge" by their being "written" to us. However good oral instruction, there is no small danger of mistake in the hearer, and still more of letting slip even what we understand. But we can read again and again what is written, and make it our own more fully. Hence the signal profit of Scripture as the permanent Word of God to our souls, as nothing else can be.

A similar advantage, here noted next, Scripture possesses, is "that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth." Pure science has nothing moral in it, still less an affection, and least of all makes God known to the soul. and in His true relationship to me. This is just what His Word does communicate in all certainty, for His Word is truth of that spiritual kind. Unbelief makes the truth of God the most uncertain of all things, like heathenism with its gods many and lords many, but the one true and living God unknown.

How good too is the fruit resulting to others! "That thou mightest report words of truth, to them that send thee" as a trusty representative, or that "send to thee" for advice in difficulty. Does not God

give songs in the night, who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?

The apothegms in verses 22-29 all have a prohibitory character, save the last, which is a positive example to be followed and honored.

It may seem singular to say, "Rob not the poor," and in particular "because he is poor"; but it is a warning especially, so base, selfish, and cruel as human nature is now. The rich who might appear the more inviting prey to the unscrupulous are able to take care of themselves in ways that the poor would or could not essay. Hence, bad men flatter the rich for gain, while they also rob or oppress those who ought to be objects of pity. But Jehovah has His eye on such villainy, at the very gate whence justice should flow, pleads the cause of the poor and the afflicted, and repays heavily those who despoil them.

With one given to anger, it is hard to keep friends, and unsafe to make a friend; and to go with a furious soul is to run the risk of learning his ways, and thus to get a snare instead of a deterrent. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, says the Apostle; not to hear him in this is to give place to the devil. Even if we have grave reason, the only right Christian feeling is to forgive; and if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses. You who are slow to forget your wrongs, perhaps imaginary, do you believe Christ's words?

If one realized the duty of having to pay, in any bargain that is made, or suretyship which one agrees to, there would be a serious consideration whether God approves and leads the way. But as drowning men catch at a straw for life, so the imprudent lose their own means, and then seek to draw to their help their trusting friends, even if these have little or nothing to spare. It is a trifle, say they, or a mere form without risk; for it is sure to answer. The sanguine and the improvident thus ensnare themselves into their own ruin. How homely and pungent the hint! If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away the bed from under thee?

Another dishonesty is then held up to censure, in which men are apt to cheat craftily rather than with open violence. The ancient landmark set by thy fathers is to be kept contentedly, and without allowing a covetous desire.

Last, it is well to regard a man diligent in his work in a world where so many begrudge their time, care, and labor. No wonder that one who does his business with conscience, despatch, and skill, makes himself at length an object for the king's honor if not need, leaving behind the obscure with whose company he began. Those who rule value industrial integrity.

In chapter 23:1-8 we have the cautions of wisdom against self-gratification and seeking the riches which furnish its means.

In Luke 16 our Lord depicts the easygoing gentleman-not an infidel, but orthodox-who lived to indulge himself, clothed in purple and fine linen, and making good cheer in splendor every day. But, dead and buried, in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, the immediate consequence of living to self and not to God. But here it is rather the danger to one not used to luxury; and he is told to consider what or who is before him, and to put a knife to his throat rather than yield to self-indulgence. "Give us this day our sufficient (or necessary) bread," as the Lord told His disciples to pray. Dainties are deceitful food even for a Jew, how much more for a

Christian!

If possible, more insidious and absorbing is the danger of seeking and setting the mind on being rich. Here it is not the mere appetite one has to guard against, but to cease from one's own understanding, so apt to find good reasons for an evil and selfish thing. The Apostle declares that those who desire to be rich, even if they avoid bypaths to it, fall into temptation and snare, and many unwise and hurtful lusts which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is a root of every evil, after which some having aspired have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Hence it is their uncertainty, as well as our own self-confidence, that is graphically described. Our wisdom is to set our mind on the eternal weight of glory where Christ is, and to look not on the things that are seen; for how transitory these are, while the unseen are eternal. Wealth, says the wise man, does indeed make itself wings and fly away as the eagle to the skies.

There appears to be a link of connection between the counsel in verse 6, not to eat the bread of one that has an evil eye, with setting the mind on what is not in a covetous way, as in verse 5. And this tends to bind up verse 4 both with what precedes and with what follows. For the desire for money is far less commonly for its own sake than in order to enjoy with more ease the things of the world and of human life. And the table forms no small part of these in general. But the point here pressed is to beware of accepting the hospitality of the insincere, who really begrudges the guest what he eats or drinks, while with his lips urging him to partake freely of his store. Far otherwise is such a host as he thinks in his soul. He says to thee, Eat and drink; but his heart is not with thee. The prophet Isaiah, looking to the King's reign in righteousness, lets us know that so it will not be in that future day of bliss for the earth. The vile person or fool, like Nabal, shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl or crafty be said to be bountiful. The wicked now strive to appear what they are not, and not to manifest what they are. For at heart men are ashamed of what they know themselves to be.

Can any discovery among professed friends be more sickening than to find that one's welcome was a vain show, after being taken in by it? This is here represented energetically in verse 8. The morsel thou hast eaten thou shalt vomit up, and thou shalt waste thy sweet words: that is, the thanks you expressed when you thought his invitations were as cordial as kind. From ordinary life up to the most solemn acts of reverent faith and love, to eat and drink together is regarded as an act of hearts united. So much the more painful when one finds it wholly insincere.

In verses 9-18 we hear maxims of wisdom and probity; then of the value of instruction for oneself, and of discipline for the child; next of joy over the wise heart and lips; last, of guarding against envy and cherishing the fear of Jehovah.

If grace has given us wisdom, inseparable from Christ who is God's wisdom no less than His power, who from God is made to us wisdom. it is vain and unseemly to speak its words in the ears of a foolish man. He needs to judge himself instead of listening to words which his folly prevents him from understanding, and exposes him to the sin of despising. The Lord put the same mistake in a still more pungent form when He told His disciples not to cast the holy thing to the dogs, nor to cast pearls before the swine.

Heartless dishonesty toward any and especially the fatherless draws out a far graver warning. It matters not whether it take the crafty shape of removing the ancient landmark, or the open boldness of entering into the fields of the fatherless. If they have no father, they need no lawyer any more than taking the law into their own hands. Their Kinsman, their Redeemer, is strong; He will plead their cause against the rogue, high or low.

Again, if instruction can be had, it needs application, and the application of the heart, without which the head avails not. When right affection guides and governs, the ears profit by the words of knowledge, instead of knowledge puffing up.

Then comes the serious question of training, and not merely teaching the young; and the word is, "Withhold not correction from the child." But if he needs chastening for moral delinquency, there must be self-restraint as well as holy resoluteness. He is not to be beaten with a scourge to his great pain or injury, but "with the rod." So beaten, "he shall not die," but live the better. On the other hand, the parent must not shirk pain to natural feeling—"thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." Let the father fear the end of laxity, and look for blessing on a godly beginning.

Hear the touching encouragement, if the child bow dutifully. "My son, if thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine; and my reins shall exult, when thy lips speak right things." Thus the fruit of righteousness in peace is sown for those that make peace.

But let no saint's heart envy sinners; whatever their appearance, they are set in slippery places, and cast down to destruction as in a moment. To be in the fear of Jehovah all the day is the true, safe, and happy place. "For surely there is a latter end," and the saint's "hope shall not be cut off." "Cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of endurance, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise. For yet a very little while he that cometh will come and will not tarry."

The Proverbs: Chapter 23:19-24:26

Chapter 23:19-24:26

In chapter 23, verses 19-28, the wise man begins with warning his son against association with the self-indulgent in drinking and eating. Next he commends heed to parents. Then he counsels to truth and understanding through it, with the joy it gives to the father and mother. Last, he warns against corruption as utterly ruinous on all sides.

The first part consists of parental advice against social dangers (vv. 19-25). The second (26-28) rises to Jehovah who warns of a still deeper personal danger. All opens with an affectionate appeal of a general kind.

"Thou, my son, hear and be wise, and direct thy heart in the way." Not talking but hearing is the path to wisdom, and the heart is as much concerned at least as the ears.

Love of company outside, and free from home proprieties, is no little snare. Hence it is said, "Be not among wine-bibbers, among gluttonous eaters of flesh" - a temptation to the fast growth of youth, apt to be impatient of restraint, and full of impetuous energy.

Both eating and drinking expose to lack of moderation, especially if either become a habit. "For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe with rags." Shame and suffering must be the end of so unworthy a way; and where is the fear of Jehovah in it?

Hence the more earnest expostulation of verse 22, and from both sides. "Hearken to thy father that begot thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." How sad to fail in reverence to parents, and especially to the one who had the chief care and love unflinching when the child most needed both! Oh! the shame of despising one's mother when she is old, and ought to have still more honor!

Then comes weighty counsel, and in particular at the start of public life. "Buy the truth, and sell it not, - wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." No money, it is true, can buy the truth, but the heart's desire and waiting on Him who gives freely and upbraids not. But there are many temptations to sell it for fleshly and worldly attractions, from which He alone can preserve. We may observe how truth leads to and is shown in the practical shape of wisdom, instruction, and understanding.

How emphatic too is the effect on the father's heart when this is so! "The father of a righteous one shall greatly rejoice, and he that begetteth a wise one shall have joy over him."

This is repeated, and yet more, in verse 25: "Let thy father and thy mother be glad, and let her that bore thee rejoice." How happy too for the child!

But verse 26 brings in Jehovah, it would seem, who claims the heart unreservedly. "My son, give me thy heart, and let thine eyes observe (or, delight in) my ways." He, rather than the natural father, can speak thus without limit; and where the heart is thus given to Him, the eyes do verily

delight in His ways; for they are goodness and mercy, truth and faithfulness.

On the other hand, the snare from a harlot is perilous indeed. Lost to shame, her intrigues are subtle and varied. She "is a deep ditch," as "a strange woman in a narrow pit," out of which extrication can only be through divine mercy and power.

The peril is further pointed out in verse 28. "She also lieth in wait as a robber, and increaseth the treacherous among men." It is not only that she has her insatiable ends, but that it leads on the other side to no end of wicked advantage and demoralization in every form.

Now follows (vv. 29-35) the picture of him who loves strong drink to the life, aye, and the death.

As the chapter began with the evil of self-indulgence in eating, especially in a ruler's house, so it ends with the still more evident danger of hard drinking, no matter where it may be. How graphic is the wise man's sketch!

Of all the lusts of the flesh, none from first to last exposes so much to shame and grief as intoxication. Others may be fatally ruinous to oneself or to our partners, but this is more stupefying, insensate, and disposed alike to folly and violence. "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath complaining? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes?" The question is readily answered: "They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek out (or, try) mixed wine." For intemperance ever seeks more and stronger incentives, till the thirst after them becomes overpowering.

No less wise is the advice given to nip the inclination in the bud. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it sparkleth (or, giveth its color) in the cup, when it goeth down smoothly (or, moveth itself aright)." Resist the beginnings; be not caught by the attractive look. "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." "The wine of violence" is not the only danger, but the bright and the agreeable also.

What is the end in this world, of which the preacher here warns? "At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." As this is true of all our own will, so it particularly is the effect of yielding to this debasing gratification. What bodily anguish it entails, what self-reproach for conscience!

The follies too, which are among its results, are so stupid as to expose the victims to derision, as well as to excited feelings and expressions alien to them at ordinary times. "Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thy heart shall utter froward things"-conduct which they themselves deplore when sober, hardly believing that they can have committed themselves to such disgrace.

But this is not all. "Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea"-all sense of danger is gone in this temporary madness, only exceeded by an opposite peril, "and as he that lieth down on the top of a mast."

The talk too is no less idiotic: "They have smitten me"; yet, "I am not sore"; "They have beaten me"; yet, "I felt not"; "When shall I awake?" they babble out; but even so, they are not ashamed to say, "I will seek it yet again."

The value of wisdom is the main topic in chapter 24:1-9; but here, not as we have already seen, in the fear of Jehovah, but as the strength of the faithful in the midst of evil men given to destruction and mischief. Why should any envy their lot or like their company?

Men may be clever and interesting; but what of these qualities, if they are "evil"? They may flourish for a while; but they are enemies of God, and just objects of horror, but pity too, and no more to be envied in any respect than their company to be sought. Underneath wit on the surface is their study of destruction, so that their lips cannot conceal the mischief they talk.

It is wholly different with the wisdom that begins with fearing Jehovah, which instead of active mischief builds up a house for family use, and by understanding establishes it. And as He prospered the wise in their projects, so He gave knowledge to furnish richly and pleasantly. For this book contemplates His people on earth, not present suffering with Christ and glory on high. How different Christ's part here below, and the lot of His faithful ones!

A wise man is strong, we are told. It is moral strength, the reverse of Samson's physical strength with moral weakness and folly. Hence too a man of knowledge increaseth strength, instead of losing its advantage by heedlessness. As it is prospered in peace, so wise counsel is of the greatest weight in war (v. 6), where, as danger thickens, safety is in multitude of counselors, not in self-confidence.

How well it is said that "wisdom is too high for a fool!" He is self-satisfied, knows not his emptiness, and asks not of God what he lacks. So far, he does well not to open his mouth where counsel is sought; for what could a fool say?

But there is a man more to be dreaded and avoided than the senseless-such as devises evil doings. Hence he earns the character of a master of intrigues. These men are truly mischievous.

To a godly soul another consideration arises still more serious: "the thought of foolishness is sin, and the scorner is an abomination to men." It is not only the carrying out of mischief, but the thought of foolishness is sin. How sad when the heart allows it, instead of fleeing at once to God against it! But the scorner is odious above all, as one who is not only evil in mind and heart, but he takes pleasure in lowering and maligning the righteous.

Courage is tested in the day of trouble, which gives the occasion to show its worth. But it shines better in delivering those who are in it; and this with integrity before Him who sees, to whom each owes his preservation, and who takes account of man according to his work. He would have one to enjoy the good He gives, but consider wisdom and the issue. A wicked man is warned against lying in wait against the righteous man, who, if he fall, will surely rise, while his enemy stumbles into ruin. Nor does it become one to rejoice at the fall even of an adversary, lest Jehovah see it, and not for nothing.

A day of trouble naturally alarms and bewilders one who has not faith and hope in God. Even the believer, distressed after the word of Christ emboldened him to join his Master on the sea, "when he saw the wind boisterous," was afraid and began to sink. Had he looked off to Jesus, his strength had been great, for there only it lay. Little faith is little strength. Jesus is the same to us whatever the sea or the wind; and Peter apart from looking to Jesus would have sunk equally on the smoothest sea without a puff of wind.

To use strength for ourselves has no worth; but to deliver those who are in peril of death unjustly, from whatever source, public or private, becomes a righteous soul. It is a duty independent of either friendship or neighborly claim. The Samaritan was the Lord's answer to the lawyer's question, Who is my neighbor? Without the least thought of justifying himself, he becomes neighbor to the sufferer who needed his help.

In vain did the priest and the Levite say of the man lying half dead on the opposite side of the road, We knew it not: Jehovah considered it.

The conviction that He preserves one's soul brings His knowledge of all before the heart, as we may believe it moved the Samaritan to mercy, besides the certainty that He renders to man according to his work.

Honey is a good thing naturally where God made all things good, nor did He begrudge the honeycomb sweet to the taste in a land flowing with milk and honey. He had pleasure in providing good things freely for man, though He knew man would abuse them all.

But what is wisdom to thy soul? The communications of Jehovah are sweeter still, says Psalm 19. If thou hast so found it, "there shall be a result, and thine expectation shall not be cut off." He that does the will of God abides forever.

The next is a warning to a wicked man to beware of craft or violence against the house of the righteous. Does not Jehovah see?

It is true that the righteous may fall ever so often-"seven times"-yet he riseth again; as the wicked do not stumble into disaster. Look on the one hand at David; at Shimei, Ahithophel, Absalom, and Joab on the other.

How selfish and base to rejoice in the fall of an enemy! It may please the subtle enemy and the flesh too; but let not your heart be glad that he stumbles, else Jehovah will surely see and be displeased, and turn away His anger from him. And to whom? Let your conscience answer.

In order to walk righteously before Jehovah, both faith and hope are very requisite. Present results are no real standard of judgment, and too apt to do harm to our spirits as well as to deceive others. And what does He see fitting? (chap. 24:19-26).

It is a great thing for a believer to occupy himself and his lips with the good, especially now that God has revealed Himself in the Son incarnate, that he may not be overcome of evil, but overcome it with good. The Jew was expressly separated from the Gentile, devoted as he was to his gods that were in no sense God. But the Christian who is surrounded by evil men and imposters is called to bear witness to Him who came in grace and truth, a divine Person as truly as He was manifested in flesh, and this that his soul might receive of His fullness. He is thus enabled to pity and seek the blessing of the wicked instead of envying them.

The awful end of rejecting the Savior to his own ruin is present to one's own spirit, humbled by the known grace of God who will send the Lord Jesus shortly to execute a judgment which will extinguish the lamp of the wicked.

Therefore all the more does the believer fear God and the king in the form of honoring him who is His representative in earthly things, and to be obeyed in all things save to the dishonor of God and His Word. Even then he is to suffer the consequences, never to resist or rebel like those given to meddling and change. For even here their calamity rises suddenly when they least expect it; and who knows the ruin that impends till it falls far and wide? "Fear God, honor the king," says 1 Pet. 2:17.

In a sort of appendix that follows the opening maxim is the value and duty of impartiality in judgment, which with respect of persons is but a mockery. But this undue favor assumes its worst form when the wicked person is complimented as righteous. Such a reversal of equity provokes whole peoples to curse the perpetrator, and draws out the abhorrence of the nations in hasty likes and dislikes.

Honest rebuke of the wicked, or of any unprincipled favor shown them, as the rule, wins delight and the cordial desire for a blessing upon such. It draws out the strongest mark, not only of respect but affection, when a right answer is given, whereas self curries favor by compromise.

The Proverbs: Chapter 24:27-25:28

Verses 27-34 counsel practical wisdom in postponing one's comforts to the providing things honest outwardly, forbid unkindness and deceit in testimony, and denounce paying off old scores of ill feeling, as they portray graphically the issue of the slothful at the close.

Consideration of others and personal honesty are entitled to have a place superior to providing personal or family comfort.

How often too the question of a neighbor comes up, and the danger of a prejudice! But the word is distinct: "be not a witness against thy neighbor without cause." Things might not be as one would desire, but "deceive not with thy lips." As the Lord put it, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." He makes it positive duty, even if the neighbor failed on his side.

Still less should a righteous person venture on retribution. Who is he to assume God's place, and say, I will do to him as he has done to me? How awful if He only rendered to us what we deserved!

The slothful man is an object of pity as well as censure. He might be estimable this way or that, but his field and his vineyard proclaim the fault, and presage his ruin. Thorns and nettles hold the field where the good grain should wave; and the wall is so broken down as to invite injurious man and beast. Is it not an objective lesson to him that beholds all with the least attention? Certainly it is no example, but a serious warning. The outward discloses the inward. The heedless man lives to sleep his life away: "a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." He may be innocent of strong drink, or of sensual pleasure, or of wasteful company. His laziness ensures his ruin. "So shall thy poverty come as a robber and thy want as a man in armor."

The true remedy is not industry for self, or activity in the world and the things of the world, but Christ the life eternal and sole propitiation for our sins to God's glory, the Lord of all, saints or sinners, the fullness of blessing and pattern of service.

Avowedly here (chap. 25:1-7) is a supplement of "proverbs of Solomon" not contained in the preceding collection. What is there in this to demur to? Those we have had abide in their excellence. If more be added of no less divine excellence, why be ungrateful to God? Is our eye evil because He is good? Let us not be faithless, but believing.

What an illustration of God's glory in concealing is that which the Apostle Paul has unveiled at last by the Spirit when the fit moment arrived for its revelation! A great mystery, truly, for it concerned Christ, and with Him the Church as His body. It was hid in God from the ages and generations when God was dealing first with individuals, then with His ancient people, while the great experiment was made in every way whether man by himself could be brought to God or worthily represent Him. The end of such dispensations was the rejection of Christ on the cross, which His grace made the ground of salvation by the gospel. Nor this only, but setting the risen and glorified Christ in the new and unparalleled glory of Head over all things heavenly and earthly, and uniting

with. Him those who now believe, in the closest union of His body, would show His love in the Father's house, and His glory at His appearing. It is a most wonderful proof that it is His glory to conceal a thing; but the principle applies widely, that we may be exercised in all dependence on what He alone can impart in His ways with us.

With kings it is the other side of sifting out, on behalf of their subjects, good or evil to reward or punish it. They are ordained by God and alike are the fountain of earthly honor, and bear the sword not in vain to punish evildoers. Hence the need of searching out a matter.

No sovereign better than Solomon exemplifies that the heart of kings is unsearchable. See his decision of the dispute between the mothers, whose was the dead child, and whose the living one. Was there one soul that penetrated his heart when he asked for a sword and said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other? The false mother was as willing as the true was not, but who could have anticipated it but the king? What sounded cruel, turned out wise and kind. "The heaven for height and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable."

All the more important, if there be precious metal, that the base alloy be taken away. Then only comes forth a thing of beauty and for use.

So is it that the wicked should not enjoy court favors. Righteous repudiation of evil ones establishes a throne in men's consciences.

But there is another moral element of great moment there and everywhere else - not self-seeking, but a truly humble mind. As our Lord said, If it were but about a place at a feast, go and take the last, that when the host comes, he may say, Friend, go up higher. So here, "Put not thyself forward in the presence of the king nor in the place of great [men]." What a reproof of vanity to be thrust lower, and in the prince's presence too! Let us not forget Him who lived what He said, and said for our edification, "everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that abaseth himself shall be exalted."

Nor is it only the self-conceit which pushes forward among the great that is reproved, lest a greater humiliation befall one. A contentious spirit is also to be shunned. See vv. 8-14.

Haste exposes to all sorts of mistakes, especially when it takes the form of strife with another, who can soon convict of error where it was least suspected, to the shame of the too confident censor, when he looks in vain for a retreat and hiding place.

One may discuss with a neighbor what concerns us deeply, but must beware of betraying what is somehow learned to his injury.

Otherwise its disclosure will disgrace him that spreads it. so that the ill effect will long abide.

On the other hand, a word spoken to the point, or in season, is here compared to apples of gold in baskets of silver - fruit of divine righteousness served up with befitting grace.

Nor is it so with so blessed a display of what is precious for a wise reprover on an attentive ear is a prized object and an ornament of great value.

Again, a faithful messenger in a world of unfaithfulness is an exceeding comfort to those that send him, here compared to the cold of snow in the time of harvest. He does indeed refresh the soul of

his masters.

Whereas he who boasts of a false gift, or falsely giving, convicts himself as a sham, like clouds and wind without rain.

These painful, mischievous, and disappointing qualities are among the still more numerous evil ways of the first man. Whatever the good things set in contrast, they are seen in full perfection in the Lord Jesus, the second Man. And they are the exercises and manifestations of the new life in the believer, which our Father would have us diligently to cultivate.

In verses 15-20 we are reminded of the great profit. in a patient spirit and a gentle tongue, even with men of high authority.

That a ruler should be hard to move from his resolve, one easily understands. Yet by long forbearing he is persuaded, where opposition would only fix his will. More generally still a soft tongue breaks the bone. Though proverbially, as men say, Hard words break no bone, gentle ones bend and break the strongest.

Sweetness is not all; one may have too much of it. A little honey is excellent; but if you have found it, eat enough and no more, lest you prove it an untoward feast, and sickness ensues, disagreeable to others no less than to yourself. But honey, or natural sweetness, must not enter an offering to the Lord. In divine things, seasoning with salt is essential, not sweetening to suit the natural palate.

Neighborly kindness becomes us, and promotes good will. But here again danger lurks, if one overdo. It is apt to degenerate into a thoughtless or a meddling habit; and instead of love, hatred ensues. We must not give occasion, especially to those that seek it.

But false witness against a neighbor is quite another thing, and extremely heinous. He that bears it is here said to be mischievous in ever so many different ways - a maul to crush, a sword to pierce when the object is at hand, and an arrow to wound at a distance.

Confidence in an unfaithful man is a fault altogether opposed, especially if it be in time of trouble, when you reckon on the support you had vainly expected. It fails your spirit as a broken tooth does the mouth, or a foot out of joint the body.

Then, again, what is it to remove a wrap in cold weather? Does it not aggravate the chill? as vinegar acts on niter, not to soothe but to irritate. So are both like him "that singeth songs to a sad heart." Prayer is seasonable for the afflicted, sympathy is suited; but singing songs is for the merry, not the sad. Mirth and its outflow must jar, as being wholly incongruous.

In verses 21-28, is a miscellaneous group of weighty counsel or observation.

The first of these maxims must have startled an Israelite ordinarily; it rises above nature and law which deals with the evil feeling and ways as they deserve. Here it is "the kindness of God," and His call to act on a goodness which is seen in Him and can only flow from Him. We see it literally acted and on a large scale when divine power drew a Syrian host, sent to apprehend Elisha, blindfolded into the capital city of Israel, and the king asked the prophet, Shall I smite? shall I smite? But the mouthpiece of God said, No; "set bread and water before them, that they may eat

and drink and go to their master." No wonder that the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel. What was strange then, and always must have been to man's mind, is now so congenial to the Christian that the Apostle was led to cite the words as a rule for any and every day. "Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." Rom. 12:20. It was God in Christ, it is God in the Christian. Is it obsolete in Christendom? May it not be in Christians? It is too precious to lose.

Verse 23 has elicited very different senses from translators, as we may see in the text and the margin of the A.V. Even here the converse of the last clause seems preferable- that as the north wind brings forth rain, so an angry countenance provokes a secret or backbiting tongue. If this be right, it is a call to gentleness even in the look, and a warning of the consequence of failure in that respect.

The next verse expresses the wretchedness of having to share a house with a contentious woman, which made a corner of the housetop an agreeable escape from such a din.

On the other hand, good news from a far country is no less refreshing than cold waters to a thirsty soul. One looks for pleasant sounds at home, instead of noisy strife or murmurs. But if one receives good news from a far land, it is all the sweeter.

There is a report or a fact, however, that is calculated to give pain and to stumble - when a righteous one totters before the wicked. Thence one hoped for a fountain springing up, and a clear river flowing out perhaps. How sad that one can find only a troubled fountain, and a defiled well!

To eat too freely of what is sweet to the palate is not good, as we may have proved to our cost through lack of subjection to the Word; but there is the opposite danger of excessive search after weighty things, which is a weight instead of a pleasure or profit. The Hebrew word translated glory, as is well known, means also weight. As the retention of the sense "glory" does not yield any result of a satisfactory nature, and requires even a negative strangely forced to give any good meaning, the other rendering is here adopted which seems to supply easily what seemingly is wanted.

There remains the last warning of wisdom, to beware of an ungoverned spirit. He that has no control over his own spirit exposes himself to all sorts of surprise, inroad, and ruin. Is he not like a city broken down and without a wall?

The Proverbs: Chapter 26:1-27:13

"The fool" has an unenviably large place in the first part of this chapter, that such as are not unwise may take warning, steer clear of thoughtlessness, and know how to act toward such a one.

There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, says the royal preacher (Eccles. 10:6, 7), as an error that proceedeth from a ruler; folly is set in great dignities, but the rich sit in a low place. I have seen bondmen upon horses, and princes walking as bondmen upon the earth. But both sights are unseemly, as anomalous as snow in summer or rain in harvest.

Next, the figure is taken from the restless change of the sparrow, and the seemingly aimless flights of the swallow, to express the emptiness of the folly that indulges in undeserved curse.

Again, the horse and the ass which need the whip and the bridle are taken to show that a rod is no less requisite to chastise fools if nothing less can restrain them.

But verses 4 and 5 are strikingly instructive save for those who know not to look for a guidance which is above appearances, and guides according to the realities in eyes that see where man cannot. To man's mind it is a contradiction; and no wonder, for he eschews a divine Master, who owns one that may be called to act rightly but provides a standard like Himself, and deals with the senseless in apparent inconsistency. In one case he leaves folly without notice, as it deserves; in another he exposes it, if he may convince even a fool of his folly, or caution another too easily imposed on, a thing not uncommon in this world.

Even to send a message through a foolish person is to incur such certainty of error that it is nothing short of cutting off one's own feet, which had better have undertaken the trouble-and well if it be not also to drink damage. It risks harm as well as total failure.

A parable is a wise saying, but it demands wisdom in its application. In the mouth of a fool, it is as incongruous as a cripple's legs which hang about or do not match.

Admonition is continued, how to deal with the senseless; and it is the more needed as such men abound; and wisdom from above is requisite to deal with them for good. Nor are sluggards left unnoticed. See vv. 8-16.

As one devoid of sense is unfit for trust and incapable, so is he unworthy of honor, and as much out of place as a bag of gems in a heap of stones-or, as the A.V. renders it, a stone bound up in a sling, a danger to those at hand.

Again, a pointedly wise saying, a proverb in the mouth of the senseless, is as a thorn going up into a drunkard's hand. Instead of instructing others, it torments himself to no profit.

So also he that hires the fool or untried casual, is as an archer that wounds everyone, instead of hitting the mark. He is a source of hurt and danger to all.

Nor is there any hope of better things, unless the fool repent and learn wisdom from above. Left to himself, he is as a dog that returns to his vomit, so he to his folly.

The wise are lowly and dependent on the only wise God. The foolish man is wise in his own eyes; he who only adds conceit to folly is the most hopeless of men.

But slothfulness is an evil to be dreaded, even if a man be far from a fool. And it is no uncommon thing for one in other respects wise to be apprehending a peril where there is none. It is because he is a sluggard, and because he shirks a duty to be done; he sees imminent danger, and cries, A lion in the way! a lion in the streets!

And what more graphic of the sluggard on his bed of ease than the door turning on his hinges! The believer has his new nature of Him, apart from whom no sparrow falls, and who counts the very hairs of his own head. The sluggard yields to the nothingarianism of self-pleasing in its lowest form.

Another vivid likeness is of the sluggard when he rises to take his meals. In his listlessness he buries his hand, not in his bosom but in a dish; and he is weary of so much as lifting it to his mouth. From such a one, who could look for gratitude to God or kindness to a suffering fellow man?

And the sluggard, like the fool, does not fail to be wise in his own eyes, yea, to count himself wiser than seven men that answer with discretion. He is so satisfied with himself that he avoids any diligence to learn, which is all well for men, but needless for him! He is a genius, and can afford to take his unfailling siesta. So it is that self-conceit flatters those who dislike work and are ambitious of a position only due to those who do not shirk labor, which is a wholesome discipline for man as he is; but it generally ends in their own ruin and the trial of those related to them.

Sluggishness is not the only fault to be shunned. There may be activity to dread of a still more mischievous sort, and it is graphically set out in verses 17-22. We have to beware of being meddling, or in sympathy with such ways.

The New Testament reveals Christ for the lost soul's salvation by faith, for the heavenly privileges of the Christian, and for the communion with God and His Son that we are called to, as well as the walk on earth befitting those who are so blessed. But there is the utmost care to urge vigilance against busyboddiness, that working quietly we may eat our own bread, and be diligent too so as to help others also. But to trouble ourselves with other people's quarrels where no duty of ours lies, is like taking a dog by the ears, which either threatens a bite when he is loosed, or keeps us indefinitely to avoid it. And who is to blame?

Such uncalled-for activity grows the more it is indulged in, and is likely to end in playing the madman casting combustibles and causes of wound and even death, while he deceives his neighbor by the pretense that he meant no more than jest.

But there is a very insidious form of evil, and if possible more mischievous still, where the harm is done slyly by evilly affecting others. What worse than the whisperer or talebearer, here compared to the wood that acts as fuel to the fire? So we are told, where no wood is, the fire goes out; and where is no whisperer, strife ceaseth.

On the other hand, coals to hot embers, and wood to fire, is a contentious man to inflame strife. How often have we not known it to our pain! Happy is he who hates it so as to shun its beginning by dwelling in love!

For such is the flesh even in believers, as to make the whisperer's insinuations too easy and welcome; and once received, instead of being rejected, they go down and take possession of our souls to the innermost. It is a grievous danger when the guard sleeps at wisdom's gate; and our very simplicity exposes us to be misled cruelly.

To the end of the chapter are denunciations of like mischief under the guise of fair speech and flattery. It is deceit in various forms, against which we are energetically put on our guard—a needful caution in this evil age, especially for the Christian who walks in grace and refuses to avenge himself.

There is no real difficulty, no sufficient reason to doubt the force of the opening words of verse 23. They do not in the least imply in this connection the heat of wrath, which might well go with "a wicked heart" ordinarily; but here is meant the extraordinary combination of expressing ardent affection with the desire to do evil. This, not that, is fitly compared to an earthen vessel overlaid not with silver, but its "dross."

So the hatred (v. 24) which is eminently dangerous is not what explodes in violent words, but would work out unawares, and therefore dissembles with the lips. The benevolent words only conceal the deceit within the man.

Therefore (v. 25), when such a one's voice is gracious, there is the strongest reason not to believe; for there is no sure faith, save in a testimony altogether reliable. Hence the blessedness to a Christian, that his faith and hope too are in the God who cannot lie, who has spoken to us in His Son, come in love as sure as the truth. But as to fallen man, how different! "for there are seven abominations in his heart." It is filled with every evil of corruption no less than violence, as the Savior testified. Jehovah did not fail to make hidden evil manifest in the most public way.

"Dissimulations" (v. 26) may succeed among men for a season; but even before the kingdom of God appears in displayed power. He knows how to check Satan and expose malicious craft during the evil day. Thus from time to time is the covering stripped from hatred, and "wickedness made manifest in the congregation."

Again, when mischievous man (v. 27) digs a pit for others, therein he is caused to fall; and where he rolls a stone for the head of his neighbor, it recoils on himself. Even the heathen expressed their sense of such retribution here below, though they knew not God.

The last verse tells us of the extreme wickedness of fallen man, that is not content with deceiving; "a lying tongue hateth those injured by it"; and "a flattering mouth worketh ruin" for subject as well as object. "Let the righteous smite me, it is a kindness; and let him reprove me, it is an excellent oil which my head shall not refuse." This is to humble oneself under God's mighty hand and be exalted in due time.

The group of counsels before us in chapter 27:1-6 is leveled at self-confidence, which takes the place of dependence on God, the first principle of the life of faith which the enemy seeks to annul, whether for earth, in Messiah's kingdom by-and-by, or for heaven as with Christians. Yet we need

also to be on guard against folly and ill feeling, and to welcome the plain truth as real kindness.

Very vivid is the word in Jas. 4:13-16 in its appeal to beware of similar boasting. "Go to now ye that say, To-day and to-morrow we will go into this city and spend a year there, and trade and make gain, yet that know not what [shall be] on the morrow. What [is] your life? For ye are a vapor, appearing for a little while, and then vanishing away; instead of your saying, If the Lord will, and we live, we shall also do this or that. But now ye glory in your boastings: all such glorying is evil." In these moral matters both the Old Testament and the New bring in the Lord to judge and displace self.

Then again the Old Testament saint knew quite enough of his failure and of his need of sovereign grace to banish high thoughts of himself, and to attribute every right word to God. How inconsistent to sound his own praise! how becoming to be silent as to any good on his part. If a stranger praised him, it was more than he deserved. Here too the New Testament reveals the truth more deeply in Christ for lowliness of mind, esteeming one another as more excellent than ourselves, not as a sentiment but as a living truth of faith.

There is however the other side to try our hearts. We cannot, ought not regard "a fool's vexation" with complacency, but feel its grievous impropriety. "A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty," little as its particles be. But that, groundless as it is, exceeds both in its dead weight and intolerable unbecomingness.

Nor has one to face before God such frivolous complaints only, but also the cruelty of wrath and the outrageousness of anger; for surely the sun ought not to set on either outburst or reserve in this way. But there is another evil feeling still more unworthy and dangerous: "Who is able to stand before jealousy?" Let us look up for grace to value anything good in another, and the more if conscious that we claim not that particular good ourselves. To allow jealousy in ourselves, or to let others insinuate it, is to give room to the great enemy.

It is the property of real love, to prove its activity; if it abide hidden when called to speak or work according to the heart, it betrays self rather than true affection. Even if there is a faultiness, love is bound to give "open rebuke." Indifference passes for much in this world, but it is the reverse of love, and cares for self, when it hides to spare danger and yet pretends affection.

A friend's wounds, on the contrary, are faithful, for God's will is thus done, even though misunderstood and resented for a while. An enemy betrays himself by the very profuseness of his kisses. God is not in such a display, but too often no more than partisanship in a human cause.

The group before us in verses 7-13 pursues the warning against dangers from our own selves, as well as from without. Whatever be the means of one who fears God, self-indulgence is unworthy of one who now lives in a scene where we have the poor always with us, and many and sudden reverses

to call forth special compassion. What a lesson for the Christian when on the two occasions the Lord fed the multitude miraculously, it was on barley loaves and small fishes. How far from show or appetizing! And the prayer taught the disciples to ask for "sufficient bread." The full soul is unworthy of His name, and the honeycomb he loathes convicts him of following the Lord of glory afar off. It is happy when one is hungry enough to relish every bitter thing put before us by our God

and Father.

When God pronounced Cain a fugitive and a vagabond because he slew his righteous and accepted brother, well for him to have heeded the word of the Lord, but there is no such call for one ordinarily. The family is the place appointed as the rule in the world as it is. Even the bird owns the attraction of her nest. Wandering from either is a picture of wretchedness.

God has constituted the earth and man, that the very desert does not refuse to produce unguent and perfume, which singularly refresh the heart when depressed, not merely there but in lands where abundance reigns. But no less sweet is the hearty counsel from one's friend.

Yet more should one make of one's own friend, of one's father's friend also, in a world of forgetfulness. Nevertheless, in the day of one's calamity, it is unwise to rush for sympathy, even to one's brother. A neighbor near one is apt to prove better than a brother afar off. Claim irritates; love is free and holy.

When a son walks wisely, what joy to a parent's heart! It is the best answer to the reproach which watchfulness must expect from such as are lax.

Prudence sees evil beforehand and hides from it; the simple is blind, goes forward and suffers.

None should become surety unless he be prepared to lose; and this, true in case of a man, is still more dangerous for a strange woman. (Concluded)

NOTE: Mr. Kelly was taken home at this point in his exposition of Proverbs.

Rahab

The case of Rahab is one of deep interest. The Spirit of God uses it in the New Testament in two very different ways: in Hebrews 11 to encourage believers; in James 2 to convict "vain" (that is, hollow, empty, foolish) professors. Hebrews shows us that faith is the only door of escape from certain and imminent judgment; James, that saving faith is never barren, neither is it ashamed to declare itself, as some would teach. Her interesting story comes in during the progress of events of momentous importance to this earth, but rather as a digression than as arising necessarily out of the course of the narrative. May the object of God in giving it not be lost on us.

Years before, the Lord had sent an arrow of conviction into the conscience of many a Canaanite. For centuries they had been going on wickedly, filling up their iniquity, and in her day the limits of the long suffering of God had been reached. Rahab's description of the effect of the drying up of the water of the Red Sea for Israel, and of the more recent overthrow of their near neighbors, the Amorites on the other side of Jordan, enables us to realize something of the terror that had fallen upon them. The Spirit of the Lord was striving with men, evidently with her. But alas! it is possible to stifle convictions. Can we not all bear witness to this? Satan deceives. The heart deceives. Appearances deceive. To sight, Jericho was impregnable, perfectly able to hold out against any besieging appliances of that day; and Satan has the fatal power, if he cannot entirely dissipate fear, yet of giving such an outward appearance of security that men say, "peace and safety," in spite of secret misgivings. Rahab's words are as descriptive of the state of things in this the boasted nineteenth century, as of her own time. What her own exercises of soul were, or how long, we are not told; but this is clear: she had no rest, and could have none, but from the Lord. But here all seemed hopeless. There was no word for her, no apparent way to get one, no link with His people; and, indeed, as looked at naturally, they were her enemies.

It is a dark picture; far darker the reality must have been to her as, day after day, the danger drew nearer.

Whatever the thought of Joshua in sending two men into Jericho, a mission of no small danger, as it proved, we are left in no uncertainty as to the purpose in their going, nor as to His leading them. How full of love, of tender compassion, He is for His creatures! How able, how willing to save, let the longing soul be where it may! It is a precious truth, and full of encouragement to those who have loved ones walled in, as it were, by place or circumstances, and bound in affliction and iron. With this bright (may we say, brilliant?) exhibition of the ways and resources of God, who need be cast down by difficulties or by seeming impossibilities? With God there are none; why then to those who believe in Him?

It is interesting, and not without instruction for us, that in Hebrews the men are called "spies," and thus, to nature, foes; yet knowing this, the Scripture says, "She... received the spies with peace." Faith had caused her to change sides before she got assurance. In James they are called "messengers," and the Spirit notices her self-sacrificing care of them; for James had to teach that faith wrought with works, and how simple the truth as seen in her. To her they were the Lord's

legates, not Joshua's. and their people were the people of Jehovah. Their then condition, without a possession, wanderers for years in the desert, did not deceive her. Jehovah was their God. "I know," she said, "that the LORD hath given you the land." And "the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." She unfeignedly bows to the judgment on her own people. It was as truly on her and her kindred, and it was too late to attempt to better them. She begs life from God for herself and for them; otherwise, it will be utter destruction. It was indeed a very real cry - "Deliver our lives from death," and the ready reply of the men confirms the thought that the Lord used them as His messengers. "Our life for yours," was the immediate and assuring answer; and her salvation was secure. They leave her a token-"this line of scarlet thread," an apparently insignificant one, the meaning of which few discerned; but whoever did, whoever gathered by faith to the shelter of it, was saved.

This secret revealed to her by the men changed Rahab's life. Whatever her pursuits before, the terrors of the judgment that was coming, and the assurance of salvation for all beneath that God-given token, constrained her to use the little time remaining well; and the Lord worked with her, so that her father, her mother, her brethren, all her kindred, were delivered (Josh. 6:23). How absorbing this one chief object of her life! How varied the condition of those she sought to save! How simple the way of their salvation-faith in God as to this secret, "the scarlet line!"

Having left the token, the messengers returned to the host. They were in the place of power. Rahab and those dear to her were in the place of safety. What then was her hope, her daily anticipation? Jericho, and all it could boast of, were gone to faith. Death was written on everything there, but Joshua was coming. The one who would visit with the unsparing judgments of God all outside the token was the savior of all beneath its shelter. Under it then, and true to those who gave it, her case is full of instruction and encouragement to all, however varied their experience, that are sheltered by the blood of Christ. There was then, as now, but one token; and the lineaments of living faith are so simple, yet so clearly delineated in her, that there is no need to trace them even for the youngest.

If we read verses 39 and 40 of Hebrews 11, we shall find there is more than salvation from judgment. She is numbered with the patriarchs among the children of the resurrection (Luke 20:35, 37), and is one that will be found to be Christ's when He comes, an heir of eternal glory (1 Cor. 15:23). Because of this, the Spirit of God in James, though writing to Jews who naturally would have very exalted thoughts of their father Abraham, puts her side by side with him-a beautiful illustration of Paul's word to the same people: "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Rom. 10:12, 13. There is no difference before Him.

One question it may be needful to answer. Is the emphasis that Jesus puts upon her works intended to throw the soul upon a self-searching examination to discover whether it be justified or not? Far from it. The severe language used by him is not addressed to an anxious soul. Such a one the Spirit would not describe as a "vain man" (chap. 2:20); for the word implies, as has been said, an empty, hollow, foolish, person. Just one who says he believes (as thousands do in reciting the creed, "I believe," etc.), and yet there are absolutely no results in conduct. Will this hollow empty statement of his belief avail him? The contrast is readily seen. Rahab really believed that judgment on them all was certainly coming, and could know no rest till assured of deliverance. She

cried earnestly for it. The "vain man" says over and over, again, that he believes that Christ is coming to judge the living and the dead, yet is totally indifferent to it all, an indifference which even devils do not share (v. 19)-a very solemn fact.

May then all who really believe the gospel be encouraged and confirmed in their faith (be it ever so simple, and they ever so timid and anxious) by this most striking and faithful narrative; and may the indifferent professor of most solemn truths, the "vain man," be warned by it.

Rejoice Evermore

It is the Lord's mind that His children should now, even in this world of sorrow and death, be happy. He has not only created us in Christ Jesus, but we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him; and the Holy Ghost says, "Rejoice evermore"; "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Phil. 4:4.

The source of our happiness, then, is the Lord Himself; and the secret of happiness is believing on Him whom we see not (1 Pet. 1:8). The measure of happiness we are entitled to enjoy is as unlimited and boundless as glory itself, "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Jesus desired that we might have His joy fulfilled in ourselves, and Scripture is written that our "joy may be full."

The Risen One

John 20

Deep and varied as are the necessities of the soul, they are all met by the death and resurrection of Christ. If it be a question of sin that affects the soul, the resurrection is the glorious proof of the complete putting away of it. The moment I see Jesus at the right hand of God, I see an end of sin; for I know He could not be there if sin was not fully atoned for. He "was delivered for our offenses"; He stood as our representative; He took upon Him our iniquities and went down into the grave under the weight thereof. But God "raised Him from the dead," and by so doing expressed His full approbation of the work of redemption. Hence we read, He "was raised again for our justification." Resurrection, therefore, meets the need of the soul as it regards the question of sin.

Then, again, when we proceed further, and enter upon the trying and difficult path of Christian testimony, we find that Jesus risen is a sovereign remedy for all the ills of life. This is happily exemplified for us in John 20. Mary repairs to the sepulcher early in the morning. And, as we learn from the parallel passage in Mark, her heart was not only sad at the loss of her gracious Friend, but also tried by the difficulty of removing the stone from the mouth of the cave. The resurrection removed at once her sorrow and her burden. Jesus risen filled the blank in her desolated affections, and removed from her shoulders the load which she was unable to sustain. She found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher, and she found also her beloved Lord whom death had, for a season, snatched from her view. Such mighty things could resurrection accomplish on behalf of a poor needy mortal!

Nor is it otherwise with us now. Have our hearts been broken and bereaved by the stern, rude hand of death? Has his cold breath chilled our affections? What is the remedy? Resurrection. Yes; resurrection, that great restorer, not merely of "tired" but of ruined nature, fills up all blanks, repairs all breaches, remedies all ills. If the conscience be affected by a sense of sin, resurrection sets it at rest by the assurance that the Surety's work has been fully accepted. If the heart be bowed down with sorrow and torn by the ravages of death, resurrection heals, soothes, and binds it up by securing the restoration and reunion of all who have gone before; it tells us to "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." 1 Thess. 4:13, 14. It is commonly thought that time fills up all the blanks which death has made in the affections; but the spiritual mind could never regard time, with its sorrowful vicissitudes, as a substitute for resurrection and its immortal joys. The poor worldling may perhaps find in passing circumstances something to fill up the void which death makes, but not so the Christian; to him resurrection is the grand object; to that he looks as the only instrumentality by which all his losses can be retrieved and all his evils remedied.

So also in the matter of burden and pressure from present circumstances; the only relief is in resurrection. Till then we have but to toil on from day to day, bearing the burden and enduring the travail of the present sorrowful scene. We may, like Mary, feel disposed to cry out, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" Who? The risen Jesus. Apprehend resurrection, and you are raised above

the influence of every burden. It is not that we may not have many a burden to carry - no doubt we may - but our burdens shall not sink us into the dust, because our hearts are buoyed up by the blessed truth that our Head is risen from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of God, and, moreover, that our place is there with Him. Faith leads the soul upward, even into the holy serenity of the divine presence; it enables us to cast our burden on the Lord, and to rest assured that He will sustain us.

How often have we shrunk from the thought of some trial or burden which appeared in the distance like a dark cloud upon the horizon; and yet, when we approached it, we found "the stone taken away from the sepulcher." The risen Jesus had rolled it away. He had removed the dark cloud and filled up the scene with the light of his own gracious countenance. Mary had come to the sepulcher expecting to find a great stone between her and the Object of her affections, but instead of that she found Jesus risen between her and the dreaded difficulty. She had come to anoint a dead body, but arrived to be blessed and made happy by a risen Savior. Such is God's way, such the power and value of resurrection. Sin, sorrows, and burdens all vanish when we find ourselves in the presence of a living Lord.

When John, in the island of Patmos, had fallen to the dust as one dead, what was it that raised him up? Resurrection, the living Jesus; "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." This set him on his feet. Communion with Him who had wrested life from the very grasp of death removed his fears and infused divine strength into his soul.

In the case of Peter and John too we find another instance of the power of resurrection. In them it is not so much a question of sin, or sorrow and burden, as of difficulty. Their minds were evidently puzzled by all that met their view at the sepulcher.

To see grave clothes so carefully arranged in the very tomb was unaccountable. But they were only puzzled because "as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." Nothing but resurrection could solve their difficulty. Had they known that, they would have been at no loss to account for the arrangement of the grave clothes; they would have known that the Destroyer of death had been there doing His mighty work, and had left behind Him the traces of His triumph.

Such was the meaning of the scene at the tomb; at least it was calculated to teach that lesson. The Lord Jesus had calmly and deliberately passed through the conflict. He had taken time to set in order His grave clothes and His tomb; He showed that it required no strained effort on His part to vanquish the power of death. However, Peter and John knew not this, and therefore they went away to their own home. The strength of Mary's affection made her linger still; love was more influential than knowledge, and though her heart was breaking she remained at the sepulcher. She would rather weep near the spot where her Lord was laid than go anywhere else. But resurrection settled everything. It filled up the blank in Mary's broken heart, and solved the difficulty in the minds of Peter and John. It dried up her tears and put a stop to their amazement. Jesus risen is, in good truth, the sovereign remedy for all evils; and nothing is needed but faith to use Him.

In chapter 20:19 we have a fresh illustration of the principle on which we are dwelling. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto

them, Peace be unto you." Here the closed door evidenced the fear of the disciples. They were afraid of the Jews. And what could remedy their fear? Nothing but communion with their risen Lord. Nor did He (blessed be His name) leave them destitute of that remedy; He appeared among them; He pronounced His benediction upon them. "Peace be unto you," said He. "Peace," not because their door was secured, but because Jesus was risen. Who could harm them while they had in their midst the mighty Vanquisher of death and hell?

There is unspeakable value in this word "peace," used by such a One at such a time. The peace that flows from fellowship with the risen Son of God cannot be ruffled by the vicissitudes and storms of this world; it is the peace of the inner sanctuary, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Why are we so much troubled at times by the condition of things around us? Why do we betake ourselves, if not to the closed door, at least to some other human resource? Surely because we are not walking with our eye steadily fixed on Him who was dead but who is alive for evermore, who has all power in heaven and on earth. Did we but realize that our portion is in Him, yea, that He Himself is our portion, we should be far less affected by the prospects of this poor world. The politics, the agriculture, the commerce of earth would find their proper place in our hearts if we could remember that we "are dead," and our "life is hid with Christ in God."

It is commonly said that while we are here we must take an interest in the circumstances, the prospects, the destinies of earth. But then "our citizenship is in heaven." We are not of earth at all. Those who are risen with Christ are no longer of earth. All that in us (I mean believers) which could have any affinity with earth - all that which can be called nature-is dead, and should be reckoned as dead; and our life is in heaven, where we are now in spirit and principle. No doubt if we only see ourselves as earthly men, we shall be occupied with earthly things; but if we see ourselves as heavenly men, we shall as a consequence be occupied about heavenly things. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." This is simple. "Things... above" are those which we are commanded to seek, and that because we are risen with Christ.

The difference between Abraham in his day and a believer now may be thus stated: Abraham was going from earth to heaven; the believer has come from heaven to earth; that is, in spirit and by faith. Abraham was a pilgrim on earth because he sought a heavenly country; the believer is a pilgrim because he has gotten a heavenly country. The Christian should regard himself as one who has come from heaven to go through the scenes and engagements of earth. This would impart a high and heavenly tone to his character and walk here. The Lord grant that it may be more so with all who name the name of Jesus.

It may be remarked in conclusion that the Lord Jesus remedied the fear of His poor disciples by coming into their midst and associating Himself with them in all their circumstances. It was not so much a question of actual deliverance from the matter that caused the fear, but rather raising their souls above it by fellowship with Himself. They forgot the Jews, they forgot their fear, they forgot everything, because their souls were occupied with their risen Lord.

The Lord's way is often to leave His people in trial, and to be with them therein. Paul might desire to get rid of the thorn, but the answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is a far richer mercy to have the grace and presence of Jesus in the trial, than to be delivered from it. The Lord allowed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be cast into the furnace; but if He did, He came down and talked with them therein. This was infinitely more gracious of Him, and more honorable to them,

than if He had interposed on their behalf before they were cast in.

May it be our heart's desire to find ourselves in company with the risen Lord as we pass through this trying scene; and whether it be the furnace of affliction, or the storm of persecution, we shall have peace; whether it be the bereavement of the heart, the burden of the shoulder, the difficulty of the mind, the fear or unbelief of the heart-all will be remedied by fellowship with Him who was raised from the dead.

C. H. M.

Scripture Notes: Isaiah 45:23

The light thrown upon this scripture by its citation in the New Testament is remarkable. But before we proceed to this, a glance at the context will be both interesting and profitable. In verse 22, following upon the assertion that, in contrast with idols, Jehovah alone is God, that "there is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside Me," we have the universal invitation of grace, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Then comes the solemn asseveration, enforced by a divine oath, "That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear"; that is, Jehovah, the Creator God, has thus decreed.

Turning now to Philippians 2, we find that these words are applied to the One who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. There are, moreover, two notable explanations added - explanations which never could have been discovered, had they not thus been divinely given. The first is, that "every knee" applies to all in heaven, to all in earth, and to all under the earth; that is, to all intelligences, whether in heaven, or in earth, or in hell-all demons, as well as all angels, saints, and men. Second, "every tongue shall swear" is seen to mean the confession to the glory of God the Father that Jesus is Lord, all alike owning the exaltation and the given name, which is above every name, of Jesus as Lord, in virtue of His death on the cross. What an unfolding, both of the glory of the Person of our blessed Lord, as well as of God's appreciation of the life and death of Him who was known on earth as Jesus of Nazareth!

In Romans 14 we find another application. "Why," asks the Apostle, "dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." vv. 10-12. In this scripture, bowing the knee is referred to our accountability to God in judgment; and we are exhorted, because all alike have before them the prospect of the judgment seat, to desist from judging one another. (Compare 1 Cor. 4:3-5.) We know from another scripture that the Father has committed all judgment to the Son; and this fact, taken in connection with the statement of the Apostle, brings out again the essential and personal glories of Him who will be the Judge of all.

These several scriptures, when combined, contain a remarkable revelation of the purpose of God as to the absolute supremacy of His beloved Son, and also of His will to have that supremacy universally owned. Jesus of Nazareth is already, and one day shall be confessed to be, Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father.

Scripture Notes: John 2:17

John 2:17

This scripture, as the reader will perceive, is cited from Psalm 69, where we read, "I am become a stranger unto My brethren, and an alien unto My mother's children. For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me." vv. 8, 9. Tracing out its meaning, both in the psalm and also in the gospel, we learn first, that our blessed Lord was so devoted to the glory of God, in the interests of His house, that it lifted Him above every natural claim that might have been alleged against Him. Hence it was that, when Mary, finding Him in the temple, said, "Son, why halt Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing," He replied, "How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" Luke 2:48, 49. The claim of the Father, whose will He had come to do, excluded every other claim; and in the constant acknowledgment of this, He found His incessant delight. It was His daily food (Psalm 40:8; John 4:34). This led, second, to His complete identification with God and His interests on the earth, so that He felt everything according to God, and for God. He thus said, "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me." He received everything, not as it related to Himself, but as it affected God and His glory. A reproach uttered against God wounded His heart, because He was here not for Himself, but for God.

How little do we know, as being here for Christ, what it is to be more wounded by any dishonor done to the name of Christ than by a wrong done to ourselves! This indeed could only be when we have lost sight of ourselves in His interests; when the aim and object of all we are and do, as well as the motive, is Christ. (Compare Phil. 1:12-26.)

Coming now to John's Gospel, we find that, under the constraint of His consuming zeal, our Lord was intolerant of any corruption in His Father's house. Thus it was that He purged the temple when He went up to Jerusalem at this feast of the Passover. And what were the evils that evoked this display of His zeal? He found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting. All this had commenced for the convenience of the people. It was easier to buy an animal for sacrifice on the spot than to bring one up to Jerusalem, and it saved much trouble to be able to purchase the sacred shekel when it was wanted; and in this way a regular traffic had sprung up within the holy precincts of the temple buildings. In other words, man's convenience had shut out all thought of what was due to God, and in this way man had usurped the place of God. Is there no warning voice in all this for the present day? Does not the convenience of the saints, and other things, often set aside the Lord's authority as Son over the house of God? The antidote to all corruption in the assembly is a zeal such as that which motivated our blessed Lord - a zeal which will be always directed to the maintenance of His rights, and the holiness of the house of God. (Compare Psalm 101)

The Secret of the Lord

If I say that I am in Christ, I say that Christ is in me; and my business is to show out Christ and nothing else. It is having Christ always before me, and really walking in the presence of God. The great secret is to be more with God than anybody; and if not, I shall go astray. The moment I get away from the conscious presence of God, self has a certain place; whereas, if I am really in the presence of God, I am nothing.

I am not competent to discern the will of God if I am not with Him. "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him." Psalm 25:14. I have to be before God Himself, or else I shall never keep straight; and for that, I must be in the path of God for Him to lead me. I cannot realize God's presence out of the path of His will. The instant I lose the sense of dependence. I am in danger. Obedience and dependence are the two living principles of the new man. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

Self-Surrender: Part 1

Philippians 2

It is perfectly delightful to contemplate the moral triumphs of Christianity-the victories which it gains over self and the world, and the marvelous way in which such victories are obtained. The law said, Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that. But Christianity speaks a totally different language. In it, we see life bestowed as a free gift-life flowing down from a risen and glorified Christ. This is something entirely beyond the range of the law. The language of the law was, "The man that doeth them shall live in them" (Gal. 3:12). Long life in the land was all the law proposed to the man who could keep it. Eternal life in a risen Christ was something utterly unknown and unthought-of under the legal system.

But Christianity not only gives eternal life, it also gives an Object with which that life can be occupied - a center around which the affections of that life can circulate-a model on which that life can be formed. Thus it gains its mighty moral triumphs. Thus it gains its conquests over a selfish nature and a selfish world. It gives divine life and a divine center; and as the life moves around that center, we are taken out of self.

This is the secret of self-surrender. It cannot be reached in any other way. The unconverted man finds his center in self; and hence, to tell him not to be selfish is to tell him not to be at all. This holds good even in the matter of mere religiousness. A man will attend to his religion in order, as he thinks, to promote his eternal interest; but this is quite a different thing from finding an object and a center outside himself. Christianity alone can supply these. The gospel of the grace of God is the only thing that can effectually meet man's need and deliver him from the selfishness which belongs to him. The unrenowned man lives for himself. He has no higher object. The life which he possesses is alienated from the life of God. He is away from God. He moves around another center altogether; and until he is born again, until he is renewed, regenerated, born of the Word and Spirit of God, it cannot be otherwise. Self is his object, his center, in all things. He may be moral, amiable, religious, benevolent; but until he is converted, he has not finished with himself as to the ground of his being, or as to the center around which that being revolves.

The foregoing train of thought naturally introduces us to the striking and beautiful illustration of our theme afforded in Philippians 2. In it we have a series of examples of self surrender, commencing with a divinely perfect One, the Lord Himself.

But, ere we proceed to gaze upon this exquisite picture, it may be well to inquire what it was that rendered it needful to present such a picture before the Philippian saints. The attentive reader will doubtless observe, in the course of this most charming epistle, certain delicate touches from the inspired pen, leading to the conclusion that the keen and vigilant eye of the Apostle detected a certain root of evil in the bosom of the beloved and cherished assembly gathered at Philippi. To this he addresses himself, not with a sledge hammer or long whip, but with a refinement and delicacy far more powerful than either the one or the other. The mightiest moral results are

reached by those delicate touches from the hand of the Holy Spirit.

But what was the root to which we have referred? It was not a splitting into sects and parties, as at Corinth. It was not a return to law and ritualism, as at Galatia. It was not a hankering after philosophy and the rudiments of the world, as at Colosse. What was it then? It was a root of envy and strife. The sprouting of this root is seen very distinctly in the collision between those two sisters, Euodias and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2); but it is glanced at in earlier portions of the epistle, and a divine remedy supplied.

It is a great point with a medical man not only to understand what is wrong with his patient but also to understand the true remedy. Some physicians are clever in discovering the root of the disease, but they do not, so well know what remedy to apply. Others, again, are skilled in the knowledge of medicine, the powers of various drugs; but they do not know how to apply them in individual cases. The divine Physician knows both the disease and its remedy. He knows exactly what is the matter with us, and He knows what will do us good. He sees the root of the matter, and He applies a radical cure. He does not treat cases superficially. He is perfect in diagnosis. He does not guess at our disease from mere surface symptoms. His keen eye penetrates at once to the very bottom of the case, and His skillful hand applies the true remedy.

Thus it is in the epistle to the Philippians. These saints held a very large place in the large heart of the Apostle. He loved them much, and they loved him. Again and again he speaks, in grateful accents, of their fellowship with him in the gospel from the very first. But all this did not and could not shut his eyes to what was wrong among them. It is said that "love is blind." In one sense we look upon this saying as a libel upon love. If it were said that "love is superior to faults," it would be nearer the truth. What would anyone give for blind love? of what use would it be to be loved by one who only loved us because he was ignorant of our blots and blemishes? If it be meant that love will not see our blots, it is blessedly true (Numb. 23:21); but no one would care for a love that was not at once aware of, and superior to, our failures and infirmities.

Paul loved the saints at Philippi, and rejoiced in their love to him, and tasted the fragrant fruit of that love again and again. But then he saw that it was one thing to love and be kind to a distant apostle, and quite another thing to agree among themselves. Doubtless Euodias and Syntyche both contributed to send a present to Paul, though they were not pulling harmoniously together in the wear and tear of daily life and service. This is, alas! no uncommon case. Many sisters and brothers too are ready to contribute of their substance to help some distant servant of Christ, and yet they do not walk pleasantly together. How is this? There is a lack of self-surrender. This, we may rest assured, is the real secret of much of the "strife" and "vainglory" so painfully manifest in the very midst of the people of God.

It is one thing to walk alone, and it is another thing to walk in company with our brethren in the practical recognition of that great truth of the unity of the body, and in the remembrance that "we are members one of another." Christians are not to regard themselves as mere individuals, as isolated atoms, as independent persons. This cannot be, seeing that Scripture declares, "There is one body," and we are members thereof. This is a divine truth—a grand fact—a positive reality. We are not to be like the hairs of an electrified broom, each standing out in lonely individuality. We are living members of a living body, each one having to do with other members with whom we are connected by a bond which no power of earth or hell can sever. In a word, there is a relationship

formed by the presence of the Holy Spirit, who not only dwells in each individual member, but is the power of the unity of the one body. It is the presence of God the Spirit in the Church that constitutes that Church the one living body of the living Head.

Now, it is when we are called to walk in the actual acknowledgment of this great truth that there is a demand for self surrender. If we were merely solitary individuals, treading each in his own self-chosen path, carrying out his own peculiar thoughts, walking in the sparks of his own kindling, pursuing his own peculiar line of things, indulging his own will, then, indeed, a quantity of self might be retained. If Euodias and Syntyche could have walked alone, there would have been no collision-no strife. But they were called to walk together, and here was the demand for self-surrender.

And be it ever remembered, that Christians are not members of a club, of a sect, or of an association; they are members of a body, each connected with all, and all connected by the fact of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, with the risen and glorified Head in heaven.

This is an immense truth, and the practical carrying out of it will cost us not only all we have, but all we are. There is no place in all the universe where self will be so pulled to pieces, as in the assembly of God. And is it not well? Is it not a powerful proof of the divine ground on which that assembly is gathered? Are we not-should we not be-glad to have our hateful self thus pulled to pieces? Shall we-ought we to-run away from those who do it for us? Are we not glad-do we not often pray-to get rid of self? And shall we quarrel with those who are God's instruments in answering our prayers? True, they may do the work roughly and clumsily, but no matter for that. Whoever helps me to crush and sink self, does me a kind turn, however awkwardly he may do it. One thing is certain, no man can ever rob us of that which, after all, is the only thing worth having; namely, Christ. This is a precious consolation. Let self go; we shall have the more of Christ. Euodias might lay the blame on Syntyche, and Syntyche on Euodias; the Apostle does not raise the question of which was right or of which was wrong, but he beseeches both to be "of the same mind in the Lord."

Here lies the divine secret. It is self-surrender. But this must be a real thing. There is no use in talking about sinking self while, at the same time, self is fed and patted on the back. We sometimes pray with marvelous fervor to be enabled to trample self in the dust, and the very next moment, if anyone seems to cross our path, self is like a porcupine with all its quills up. This will never do. God will have us real, and surely we can say, with all our weakness and folly, we want to be real -real in everything, and therefore real when we pray for the power of self-surrender. But, most assuredly, there is no place where there is more urgent demand for this lovely grace than in the bosom of the assembly of God.

Self-Surrender: Part 2

We may range through the wide domain of inspiration and not find a more exquisite model of self-surrender than that which is presented to us in the opening lines of Philippians 2. It is, we may safely say, impossible for anyone to breathe the holy atmosphere of such a scripture and not be cured of the sore evils of envy and jealousy, strife and vainglory. Let us approach the marvelous picture and, gazing intently upon it, seek to catch its inspiration.

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." vv. 1-8.

Here, then, is the divine remedy for envy and jealousy, strife and vainglory, for self-occupation in all its hideous forms. The inspired penman introduces to our hearts the self emptied, humble, obedient Man, Christ Jesus. Here was One who possessed all power in heaven and earth. Divine majesty and glory belonged to Him. He was God over all, blessed forever. By Him all things were made, and by Him they subsist. And yet He appeared in this world as a poor man-a servant- One who had not where to lay His head. The foxes and the fowls, the creatures of His formation, were better provided for than He, their Maker. They had a place to rest in. He had none. He "made Himself of no reputation." He never thought of Himself at all. He thought of others, cared for them, labored for them, wept with them, ministered to them; but He never did a thing for Himself. We never find Him taking care to supply Himself with anything. His was a life of perfect self surrender. He who was everything, made Himself nothing. He stood in perfect contrast with the first Adam, who, being but a man, thought to make himself like God, and became the serpent's slave. The Lord Jesus, who was the Most High God, took the very lowest place among men. It is utterly impossible that any man can ever take so low a place as Jesus. The word is, He "made Himself of no reputation." He went so low that no one could possibly put Him lower. He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

And be it observed that the cross is here viewed as the consummation of a life of obedience-the completion of a work of self-surrender. It is what we may call, to use a Levitical term, the burnt offering aspect of the death of Christ, rather than the sin offering. True it is, most blessedly true, that the selfsame act which consummated a life of obedience, did also put away sin; but in the passage now before us, sin-bearing is not so much the thought as self-surrender. Jesus gave up all. He veiled His glory, and came down into this poor world; and when He came, He eschewed all human pomp and grandeur, and became a poor man. His parents were poor. They were able to

procure only the lowest grade of sacrifice which the law admitted for the poor-not a bullock, not a lamb, but a pair of turtle doves. (Compare Lev. 15:29; Luke 2:24.) He Himself worked, and was known as a carpenter. Nor are we to miss the moral force of this fact by saying that every Jew was brought up to some trade. Our Lord Jesus Christ did really take a low place. The very town where He was brought up was a proverb of reproach. He was called "The Nazarene." And it was asked, with a sneer of contempt, "Is not this the carpenter?" He was a root out of a dry ground. He had no form nor comeliness, no beauty in man's eye. He was the despised, neglected, self-emptied, meek and lowly Man from first to last. He gave up all, even to life itself. In a word, His self surrender was complete.

And now, mark the result. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." vv. 9-11.

The blessed Lord Jesus took the very lowest place, but God has given Him the very highest. He made Himself nothing, but God has made Him everything. He said, "I am a worm, and no man" (Psalm 22:6); but God has set Him as Head over all. He went into the very dust of death, but God has placed Him on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

What does all this teach us? It teaches us that the way to get up is to go down. This is a grand lesson, and one which we very much need to learn. It would effectually deliver us from envy and jealousy, from strife and vainglory, from self-importance and self-occupation. God will assuredly exalt those who, in the spirit and mind of Christ, take the low place; and, on the other hand, He will as assuredly abase those who seek to be somebody.

Oh, to be nothing! This is true liberty, true happiness, true moral elevation. And then what intense power of attraction in one who makes nothing of himself! And, on the other hand, how repulsive is a pushing, forward, elbowing, self-exalting spirit! How utterly unworthy of one bearing the name of Him who made Himself of no reputation! May we not set it down as a fixed truth that ambition cannot possibly live in the presence of One who emptied Himself? No doubt. An ambitious Christian is a flagrant contradiction.

But there are other examples of self-surrender presented to us in this exquisite Philippians 2-inferior, no doubt, to the divine model at which we have been gazing, for in all this, as in all things else, the Lord Jesus must have the pre-eminence. Still, though inferior and imperfect, they are deeply interesting and invaluable to us. Look at Paul. See how deeply he had drunk into His Master's spirit of self-surrender. Hearken to the following accents from one who naturally would have allowed none to outstrip him in his career of ambition. "Yea," he says, "and if I be offered [poured forth as a drink offering] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all." v. 17.

This is uncommonly fine. Paul was ready to be nothing- to be spent-to be poured forth as a libation upon the Philippians' sacrifice. It mattered not to him who presented the sacrifice, or who performed the service, provided the thing was done. Does not this put some of us to shame? How little do we know of this excellent spirit! How prone we are to attach importance to work if we ourselves have anything to do with it! How little able to joy and rejoice with others in their sacrifice

and service! Our work, our preaching, our writings, have an interest in our view quite different from those of anyone else. In a word, self, self, detestable self, creeps in, even in that which seems to be the service of Christ. We are drawn to those who think well of us and our work, and retire from those who think otherwise. All this needs to be judged. It is unlike Christ, and unworthy of those who bear His holy name. Paul had so learned Christ as to be able to rejoice in the work and service of others as well as in his own; and even where Christ was preached of contention, he could rejoice.

Then, again, look at Timothy. Harken to the glowing testimony borne to him by the pen of inspiration. "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." vv. 19-22.

Here was self-surrender. Timothy genuinely cared for the saints; and that too at a moment when all sought their own things. And yet, dear as Timothy was to Paul's heart-valuable as such a self-denying servant must have been to him in the work of the gospel-he was willing to part with him for the sake of the Church. Timothy, likewise, was willing to be separated from his invaluable friend and father in the faith, in order to ease his anxious mind in reference to the state of the Philippians. This was indeed giving proof of real devotedness and self-surrender. Timothy did not talk of these things; he practiced them. He did not make a parade of his doings; but Paul, by the Holy Spirit, engraved them on a tablet from which they can never be erased. This was infinitely better. Let another praise thee and not thyself (Pro. 27:2).

Timothy made nothing of himself, but Paul made a great deal of him. This is divine. The sure way to get up is to go down. Such is the law of the heavenly road. A man who makes much of himself saves others the trouble of doing so. There is no possible use in two persons doing the same thing.

Self-importance is a noxious weed nowhere to be found in the entire range of the new creation. It is, alas! often found in the ways of those who profess to belong to that blessed and holy creation; but it is not of heavenly growth. It is of fallen nature - a weed that grows luxuriantly in the soil of this world. The men of this age think it laudable to push and make way for themselves. A bustling, self-important, pretentious style takes with the children of this generation. But our heavenly Master was the direct opposite to all this. He who made the worlds stooped to wash a disciple's feet (John 13); and if we are like Him we shall do the same. There is nothing more foreign to the thoughts of God, the mind of heaven, the spirit of Jesus, than self-importance and self-occupation. And, on the other hand, there is nothing that savors so of God, of heaven and of Jesus, as self-surrender.

Look once more, reader, at our picture in Philippians 2. Examine with special care that figure which occupies a very prominent place. It is Epaphroditus. Who was he? Was he a great preacher - a very eloquent speaker - a pre-eminently gifted brother? We are not told. But this we are told-and told powerfully and touchingly-he was one who exhibited a lovely spirit of self-surrender. This is better than all the gifts and eloquence, power and learning, that could possibly be concentrated in any single individual. Epaphroditus was one of that illustrious class who seek to make nothing of themselves; and, as a consequence, the inspired Apostle spares no pains to exalt him. Hear how he expatiates upon the actings of this singularly attractive personage. "Yet I

supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants."

What a cluster of dignities! What a brilliant array of titles! How little did this dear and unpretending servant of Christ imagine that he was to have such a monument erected to his memory! But the Lord will never suffer the fruits of self-sacrifice to wither, nor the name of the self-emptying to sink into oblivion. Hence it is that the name of one who otherwise might never have been heard of shines on the page of inspiration, as a brother, companion, and fellow soldier of the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

But what did this remarkable man do? Did he spend a princely fortune in the cause of Christ? We are not told, but we are told what is far better—he spent himself. This is the grand point for us to seize and ponder. It was not the surrender of his fortune merely, but the surrender of himself.

Let us hearken to the record concerning one of the true David's mighty men. "He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness." Why? Was it because he was sick? because of his pains, and aches, and privations? Nothing of the sort. Epaphroditus did not belong to the generation of whiners and complainers. He was thinking of others. "He... was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick." How lovely! He was occupied about the Philippians and their sorrow about him. The only thing that affected him in his illness was the thought of how it would affect them. Perfectly exquisite! This honored servant of Christ had brought himself to death's door to serve others; and when there, in place of being occupied about himself and his ailments, he was thinking of the sorrows of others. "He was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

Can anything be more morally beautiful than this? It is one of the rarest pictures ever presented to the human eye. There is Epaphroditus, nigh unto death for the sake of others; but he is full of sorrow about the Philippians; and the Philippians are full of sorrow about him; Paul is full of sorrow about both; and God comes and mingles Himself with the scene, and, in mercy to all, raises up the loved one from the bed of death.

And then mark the tender solicitude of the blessed Apostle. It is like some tender mother sending her darling son away, and committing him, with fond earnestness, to the care of some friend. "I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation." Why? Was it because of his gifts, his rank, or his wealth? No, but because of his self-surrender. "Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me." O dear Christian reader, let us think on these things. We have introduced you to a picture and we leave you to gaze upon it. The grouping is divine. There is a moral line running through the entire scene and linking the figures into one striking group. It is like the anointing of the true Aaron, and the oil flowing down to the skirts of His garments (Psalm 133). We have the blessed Lord, perfect in His self-surrender, as in all beside; and then we have Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, each, in his measure, exhibiting the rare and lovely grace of self-surrender.

Service

Connect your service with nothing but God, not with any particular set of persons. You may be comforted by fellowship, and your heart refreshed; but you must work by your own individual faith and energy, without leaning on anyone whatever; for if you do, you cannot be a faithful servant. Service must ever be measured by faith, and one's own communion with God. Saul even may be a prophet, when he gets among the prophets; but David was always the same, in the cave or anywhere. While the choicest blessings given me here are in fellowship, yet a man's service must flow from himself, else there will be weakness. If I have the word of wisdom, I must use it for the saint who may seek my counsel. It is "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." But also, "Let every man prove his own work," and then shall he have "rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." There is no single place grace brings us into but is a place of temptation; and that we cannot escape, though we shall be helped through. In every age the blessing has been from individual agency; and the moment it has ceased to be this, it has declined into the world. It is humbling, but it makes us feel that all comes immediately from God. The tendency of association is to make us lean upon one another.

When there are great arrangements for carrying on work, there is not the recognition of this inherent blessing which "tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." I do not tarry for man, if I have faith in God. I act upon the strength of that. Let a man act as the Lord leads him. The Spirit of God is not to be fettered by man.

All power arises from the direct authoritative energy of the Holy Ghost in the individual. Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13) were sent forth by the Holy Ghost, recommended to the grace of God by the church at Antioch; but they had no communication with it till they returned, and then there was the joyful concurring of love in the service that had been performed. He that had talents went and traded. Paul says, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." Where there is a desire to act, accompanied by real energy, a man will rise up and walk; but if he cannot do this, the energy is not there, and the attempt to move is only restlessness and weakness.

Love for Jesus sets one to work. I know no other way.

Service Begins in Little Things

The history of a bird is the history of a believer. First in the nest, served by parents; then when fledged, learning to do for others what has been done for oneself. First served, and then, in the power and enjoyment of it, serving. There can be no question that it is the duty and calling of each to serve in some way. But it may not be so easy to find out your specific and proper duty or mission; and this is often the excuse for doing nothing.

I do not believe it would be found to be so difficult if you were really fit in heart to enter on service. I believe you would find out your mission if you simply occupied yourself with whatever came to your hand for the Lord. It might begin by carrying food to a sick child, or reading to an old saint.

There is a serving of one's time; that is, you will not be entrusted with very great works until you have proved your competency in small ones. It is impossible but that a star must shine, and it is equally so, that if your eye were single, your whole body would be full of light. The cause of idleness, or ignorance of one's mission is, either that one is not fit for it, or not free and humble in heart enough to begin at the little works appointed for one to do. It is a universal principle - "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

Seven "Precious" Statements

1 Pet. 1:18, 19-"THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST."

When once one finds that they are not only sinners, but lost sinners, what is there under heaven so sweet as this message from God to such a one about "the precious blood of Christ"? for by it the lost soul is redeemed, as the text states - "redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ." Man is never brought back to God by works, by prayers, nor yet by happy feelings; man being away from God, and "without strength," needs help from outside of himself altogether. This is where God meets him and saves him on the ground of what His blessed Son has done on the cross. Now, not only is the Savior precious to the saved one - the Redeemer precious to the redeemed - but the price He paid we can in a measure realize as His "precious blood." Eternity will never exhaust the praises that will go up to God from the lips of the redeemed for "the precious blood" that "cleanseth from all sin."

1 Pet. 2:7-"HE IS PRECIOUS."

If in the first we get the blood (the work of Christ), here we get Himself (the Person of Christ). Is the Person any less precious than the price He paid? No; if His blood is counted precious, He Himself becomes much more precious. The price being now paid for my redemption, I am thus set free by God to enjoy the preciousness of Christ Himself (my Redeemer). "Which is greater? - the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift. The altar, surely; so the blood has been given upon the altar for us, and now the greater and more precious is Christ Himself. Thus God makes Christ, His blessed Son, precious to us. When I am thus enjoying the preciousness of Christ, the world has less charms for me; when passing through trials, they have little effect upon me, except to bring out more of that preciousness to me in them. God makes His beloved Son so precious to my soul, that while passing through "deep waters," I fear not, for He is with me.

3) 1 Pet. 1:7-"THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH, BEING MUCH

MORE PRECIOUS THAN OF GOLD... THOUGH IT BE TRIED WITH FIRE," etc.

Now, in these trials, our faith becomes precious. If they bring out Christ's preciousness to me, they also bring out the preciousness of my faith to God. Do we not often forget this, and look only at our side. and if we get blessing, we rejoice? but, remember, out of those very trials God gets His pleasant fruit, His heart is refreshed. We should rejoice in this, and think, when so tried, all is for our good and for His praise and glory; and when the furnace is passed, the faithful heart that trusted Him, clung to Him, enjoyed Him, was satisfied with Him. His faith, which is now "much more precious than of gold" will "be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

4) 1 Sam. 3:1 - "THE WORD OF THE LORD WAS PRECIOUS IN THOSE DAYS."

Days of trial, surely, for a faithful heart! Unfaithfulness on every hand - the priest away from God - the lamp going out-the clouds of judgment gathering, soon to burst upon them - now, at this time,

His word is precious. Is it not thus with us? Do not those very trials bring out the preciousness of the Word of God? "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). When thus tried by God, His Word, when fed upon, strengthens and thus sustains us; the trial increases its preciousness to us. Next, trials from without make the Word precious whether they be from our brethren or from the world. See Jer. 15:16-20. A faithful heart, taught of God to walk in separation from all contrary to God, says, "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Do we, my brethren, thus enjoy the preciousness of the Word, so that it becomes our food, and hence our strength and joy?

Next, Psalm 119:126-128. Another faithful heart taught of God; he looks abroad and sees His Word made void, and the sight leads him nearer to God; and he earnestly calls upon Him to work - "It is time for Thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void Thy law." Precious lesson for us in this day of ours-an earnest care for the Word of God! Do we not much need this, in the language of today, to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints"? And again, "Hold that fast which thou halt, that no man take thy crown." "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold." The indifference, the carelessness, the opposition of the time, instead of carrying him along with it, caused him to cleave closer to the Word. "Therefore I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right." So again, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." May God keep us in this spirit, so that we may value and rejoice in the Word as one of His precious gifts to us.

5) 2 Pet. 1:4-"WHEREBY ARE GIVEN UNTO US EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES."

When feeding upon and rejoicing in the Word, can we fail to see the many promises there are for us? I will mention but two, and pass on. To the tried saint, the last words of Jesus before He ascended up on high are very strengthening - "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Next, to one that longs to see the blessed Savior, His last words to His servant John, from glory, were, "Behold, I come quickly." Yes, "and My reward is with Me." May the Lord awaken in our hearts a deep, deep desire to live for Him the little while; then, O my soul, thou shalt spend an eternal day in the presence of thy blessed Lord and Savior.

Psalm 126:6 - "HE THAT GOETH FORTH AND WEEPETH, BEARING PRECIOUS SEED, SHALL DOUBTLESS COME AGAIN WITH REJOICING, BRINGING HIS SHEAVES WITH HIM."

Who can tell the result of a few kind words spoken for the Lord Jesus in meekness? Sow the seed, scatter the seed, and pray thy Lord to give the increase; it may be, going forth with weeping often, but soon to return with the fruit -the ripe fruit-bringing the sheaves with you.

Jas. 5:7, 8 - "BE PATIENT THEREFORE, BRETHREN, UNTO THE COMING OF THE LORD. BEHOLD, THE HUSBANDMAN WAITETH FOR THE PRECIOUS FRUIT OF THE EARTH, AND HATH LONG PATIENCE.... BE YE ALSO PATIENT; STABLISH YOUR HEARTS: FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD DRAWETH NIGH."

May the Lord give us to be earnest, to try to lead some poor wanderer to the feet of Jesus, and then we will see the precious fruit, first, of the toil of our blessed Master, and then, of any kind word spoken or act done in and for the precious name of Jesus.

The Shadow of Thy Wings

To find its shelter in God is one of the earliest and most necessary experiences taught by the Spirit to the renewed soul. Not shelter from, God, however necessary this may be when He is considered as a judge, but shelter with Him, the question of our sins having been settled by the blood. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," and the heart now reposes with confidence in His righteousness, while in contrast the works of men are found in the paths of the destroyer (Psalm 17:1, 2, 4). The word of His lips preserves there from, and points out His paths; His eyes behold the things that are equal. This produces entire confidence in God in the midst of deadly and deceitful foes. "Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of Thy wings." v. 8. The world and the men of it are rejected, prospering apparently now as they do; and to behold the face of God in righteousness, and to bear His likeness at that glorious awakening, is the desire and satisfaction of the soul (vv. 13-15).

But there is not only future satisfaction. Having access into this grace wherein we stand gives present enjoyment of the favor of God. The wicked centers all his thoughts upon himself; he sees nothing but self, not God (Psalm 36:1, 2). But for them that know Him (v. 10), the universe is filled with what they have learned of Him. In the heavens is His mercy; unto the clouds His faithfulness; like the great mountains is His righteousness, and a vast ocean His judgment (vv. 5, 6). He preserves every living thing. It is on account of the lovingkindness of God that the children of men put their trust under the shadow of His wings. There they are abundantly satisfied with His rich provision, and drink of the exhaustless pleasures which His favor affords - a favor which is the source of life and the bright anticipation of glory (vv. 5-10). We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only therefore does the shadow of His wings afford abiding security and peace, but "bread enough and to spare"; there is "the fatness of Thy house," and there "the river of Thy pleasures."

Shelter and food are good indeed, and we are enabled to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; but power is needed for the wilderness path in order to rejoice in tribulations also. Again, "the shadow of Thy wings" becomes "my refuge, until these calamities be overpast" (Psalm 57:1). "The love of God... shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" is the key to all the exercises by the way. Divine power is there. "God... performeth all things for me" (v. 2), and that even when we were yet without strength; for then it was Christ died for the ungodly. A heavenly deliverance too is ours: "He shall send from heaven, and save" (v. 3). We shall be saved from wrath through Him. Doubtless, in the wilderness we are cast out, as David was "when he fled from Saul in the cave" (see title to psalm), his "soul... among lions" (v. 4); but God is exalted above the heavens, and His glory above all the earth (vv. 5, 11). Therefore we can praise.

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

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

Should a Christian Make a Vow?

What is commonly called a vow (that is, pledging oneself without or with penalties if it is broken) is, in itself, the fruit of self-confidence and energy of the flesh - two things which mark fallen men, and which God abhors.

Conscience is a natural thing, and came in with the fall in Eden; for till then, all in man was right, and he could not think God had anything against His own unmarred handiwork - which man was. I notice conscience here because with it comes the question of honesty and uprightness which are of great moment to the Christian. But if conscience is the knowledge which man has before God, as to God's thoughts of this or of that, the unconverted man has no light of revelation in his soul; and the light which comes in at conversion makes everything manifest. A conscience must be placed in the light and have the teaching of God ere it can rest satisfied that it knows what is right.

Many men have vowed to commit a sin, and used the vow as the excuse for doing it; and yet, had anyone said to them, Dare you say to God, "Thou wouldst that I should commit this murder," or whatever the sin be, they would reply, "Certainly I cannot. Even nature tells me it is a sin." If a man vowed to be an apostle, or to convert many people, or not to marry, etc., let him confess his sin, and leave himself in God's hand. He has assumed power to be in himself, and it is not there.

Spiritual Slothfulness

Knowledge is not faith, and principles are not power. It is a mistake to think the one or the other, however much the Holy Spirit may use the knowledge of the Word and principles of truth for our guidance and blessing. The Laodicean element, alas! so rife on every hand, is what we have most to dread, and most resolutely to overcome; and what is Laodiceanism but men priding themselves on holding orthodox principles with practical indifference to the honor and claims of our Lord Jesus Christ? Many of God's children are suffering in their souls from lack of spiritual acquaintance with God's mind as revealed in the Scriptures of eternal truth; but this is not the root of the palsied state of a large number of those who profess to be God's saints. God be praised for those who know, on the infallible authority of His Word, brought home to their hearts by His Spirit, that they "are... God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26; J.N.D. Trans.), and abound with praise and thanksgiving because of it.

When reading the epistles carefully, we are struck with the fact that the first thing which attracted the eye of an inspired apostle, when considering the state of the saints in any place, was not the amount of knowledge they possessed, but what their condition was as to "faith," and "love," and "hope"; and, after thus considering their state, he then sought to correct and instruct them as to the principles and knowledge of the truth.

Look, for instance, at the first epistle to the Thessalonians. He says, "We give thanks to God always for you, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ," etc.

And in the second epistle to the same assembly, he wrote first of all, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity [love] of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth." (1 Thess. 1:2, 3; 2 Thess. 1:3.)

Then in each epistle, instruction as to the knowledge of God's truth followed. In Ephesians he says, "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you," and then prays that the Father of glory may give to them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that they might know what is the hope of His calling, etc. (Eph. 1:15-23.) What a serious mistake then such r take who place "knowledge" on the foremost ground instead of faith, and love, and hope!

Again, if we turn to the epistle to the saints at Colosse, the same inspired Apostle says, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." He then prays that they "might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"; he has also great conflict, or agony, lest they should come short of the apprehension of the mystery of God; and he sets before them great principles of truth as to their being in Christ Jesus, with the view of delivering them from the philosophy and traditions which threatened to undermine their faith. He clearly showed them that, as being in

Christ Jesus, filled full in Him, and holding fast Christ the Head of the body, they would be delivered from rationalism on the one hand, and from ritualism on the other, and walk worthy of the Lord.

Our present object, however, is not to trace this further in the apostolic writings, important as it is, but to inquire whether the Laodicean state, so nauseous to our Lord, is not being rapidly brought about by spiritual slothfulness; and whether it does not call for great searchings of heart as to how far any of us may be helping on this closing phase of the apostate church. For it is clear that, in the apostolic epistles, we are enjoined to be "diligent," and warned against being "slothful." We are taught to give "all diligence" to add to our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly love, and love; and in this way we should be neither idle, nor unfruitful, as regards the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But where this diligence is lacking, such are blind, shortsighted, and have forgotten they were purged from their old sins. We are also exhorted to be not "slothful," but to show the same "diligence" to the full assurance of hope unto the end, as if our enjoyment of our "hope" were connected with diligence in the service and ways of the Lord. (2 Pet. 1:5-11; Heb. 6:11, 12.) Happy are those who are diligently exercised before the Lord, as to their growth in faith, and love, and hope (Rom. 15:13).

Perhaps one of the earliest outward marks of inward decline in a Christian is the readiness to excuse oneself from devotedness and diligence in the Lord's service. Difficulties are spoken of not heard of before, and dangers too are feared; so the manifest neglect is both accounted for and excused, when such "will not plow by reason of the cold," and say, "There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." (Pro. 20:4; 22:13.) The human mind can easily imagine or invent obstacles to unselfish and God honoring. service: and when this is yielded to, instead of abiding in the truth at all costs, a place of ease is readily found. When we lose the authority of the Word on our conscience, that "It is given unto us in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29), we can easily think of our present temporal advantage and personal ease in this passing scene, glide away from wisdom's ways of pleasantness and peace, and become weak and helpless as to divine things.

"The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." Pro. 26:15. Such have not only left their first love, but turn away from those who stand for God's truth at all costs. A drowsy state has taken hold on them, so that their spiritual movements are little more than mechanical, "as the door turneth upon his hinges"; and such become as indolent in caring for their souls' welfare, as a slumbering man who grieves at the trouble of bringing again his hand to his mouth (Pro. 19:24). He so slumbers that, while knowing all that is going on around him, he has no power to bestir himself. Yet, strange to say, with all this declension and indifference to the honor of the Lord, "the sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason." Pro. 26:16. What an appalling state! Such can only pride themselves on their desires, while their souls are dry and drowsy, so that the scripture is fulfilled that "the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing"; and again, "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labor." (Pro. 13:4; 21:25.)

Another mark of a slothful man is that he roasteth not that which he took in hunting (Pro. 12:27). He may associate with God's saints, hear the Word ministered with freshness and power, and may be even struck with its blessedness and suitability to himself; but when he retires, he is so

absorbed with earthly things that he takes no further interest in it. Like the huntsman's prize, it is of no real benefit to him, because he is too indolent to occupy himself with it by meditating on the truth for his present profit.

How strikingly this describes the state of many in this day. To read or to hear the Word is one thing, but to "meditate on it day and night" for our soul's profit is another thing. A clean animal, under the law, not only gathered up food, but it chewed the cud. So it was not only received, but digested for renewal of strength and personal profit, and connected too with a walk suited to it (Lev. 11:3).

We are also told that "The way of a slothful man is as a hedge of thorns." A spiritual and earnest Christian finds something almost impenetrable in the endeavor to approach such. Greatly as those who care for their souls desire it, they find communion in the things of the Lord to be out of the question, and conclude that God only can break through the "hedge of thorns." (Pro. 15:19; 12:24.) How truly too it is said, that "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." Pro. 18:9. We are familiar with it in earthly matters; but is it less true as to the things of the Lord, and our daily walk and testimony? Opportunities of honoring the Lord are missed, and never return; and the means entrusted to our stewardship are wrongly used; time is misspent, and health and strength wasted in the routine or amusements of this present evil age. "What is the harm of this or that?" says the slothful man, little thinking that one who is practically alive unto God, and seeking His glory, would never ask such a question.

The truth is that, when we fail to enjoy the love of God to us in Christ, when Christ Himself is no longer the Object and Hope of our hearts, when meditation on the Word of God becomes irksome, and closet prayer declines, when private praise and making melody in the heart to the Lord ceases, and we no longer overflow with love to our Savior God, to His ways, His people, and His service, we begin to be slothful Christians; and oh, how serious is this state! for "Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger." Pro. 19:15. Let it be noted that it is a deep sleep; alas! so deep, that ordinary means utterly fail to awaken them. How humbling and depressing is this divinely drawn picture of sleep, and yet how true! Can anything account for what we see around us associated with the name of the Lord, but slothfulness touching the things of God? And if so, how solemn and searching is the warning admonishing us to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. The thought of some is, "I know I am saved," "I know I have eternal life," and the like; but do we consider, as we ought, that if the Spirit of God is grieved or quenched by our life and walk, we may lose the comfort and enjoyment of such precious truths, and even forget that we were purged from our old sins?

The scriptures we have been looking at have mostly an individual application, so that it may be asked, What about the assembly, looking at it as God's corporate witness on earth during our Lord's absence? We need not say to many how terribly it has failed as such, so that instead of its being, as at first, the expression of the Spirit's unity, and of the unselfish love of Christ, "the Head" of the one body, division and false doctrine abound on every hand. Still the obligation of even two or three to be faithful as gathered to the Lord's name is as true as ever, and such are greatly encouraged by the Scriptures of truth (2 Tim. 2:20-22).

As, therefore, God's assembly is made up of individuals, it is impossible to be right with God in a corporate sense unless we are so individually. An assembly gathered to the Lord's name will

always manifest the moral qualities of those who comprise it individually. Here again Scripture reminds us that "By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through." Eccles. 10:18. Nothing is clearer than that, where there is earnestness in our Lord's service, and faithful walk by those who look for His coming, there is generally found comfort and blessing collectively. But where knowledge of Scripture is the first thing, with lack of earnest and united prayer, little spiritual care for Christ's members manifested, the Lord's coming as our only future dropped, there you will find not only the absence of the increase of God, but the life, and power, and union, once known, "decayeth," and the assembly discomfort is like a house which "droppeth through."

Again, we are admonished as to this by the wise man. He says, "I went by the field of the slothful... and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." Here we see "thorns," the emblem of God's displeasure, instead of the trees of His own planting; "nettles" instead of fruitful branches; and "the stone wall" of separation, once so decided and solid, now "broken down," so that evil associations are easily found within, and evil intruders not excluded. All this is traced to spiritual indolence. "Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that traveleth, and thy want as an armed man." (Prov. 24:30-34.)

But we may well look up and encourage our hearts in God, while we commend one another "to God, and to the word of His grace" (Acts 20:32). His Fatherly love has not abated. The Lord is still with us, and all His resources are open to faith. So we may exhort one another to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain

in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15:58.

The Sufferings of Christ

In the Pentateuch we have the FIGURES (or types) of the sufferings of Christ.

In the Psalms we have the FEELINGS of the sufferings of Christ.

In the prophets we have the FORECASTS of the sufferings of Christ.

In the gospels we have the FACTS of the sufferings of Christ.

In the epistles we have the FRUITS of the sufferings of Christ.

Trophimus the Invalid

2 Tim. 4:20

"Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." What a suggestive clause! The Apostle of the Gentiles, endowed with the gift of healing, and who had healed so many, leaves his friend behind him sick. When in the island of Melita, he healed the father-in-law of Publius, the chief man of the island; but here we find he has to leave Trophimus at Miletum sick. There was a needs-be for this (1 Pet. 1:6). God in His governmental dealings sometimes lays His hand on His children. The Father finds it needful at times to put forth His hand in wholesome discipline. It is often very good, very salutary, very necessary to be left in the condition of Trophimus at; Miletum. Nature does not like it, but we may be assured it is helpful. Trophimus had a lesson to learn on a sickbed at Miletum which he could not learn anywhere else, not even as Paul's companion in travel. The solitude, the prostration, the helplessness of a sickbed, are often most profitable to the soul. The Spirit of God makes use of such things to teach us some of our most sanctifying lessons. Very often it happens that a time of bodily illness is made the season of much solemn review and self-judgment in the presence of God.

It is instructive to contrast the position of Trophimus in Acts 21:29, with his position in 2 Tim. 4:20. In the former, we see him on the streets of Jerusalem in company with Paul; in the latter, we see him in the retirement of a sick chamber at Miletum. Now it was his presence with Paul that roused all the bitter prejudices of the Jews, who imagined that Paul had brought him into the temple. A Jew and an Ephesian in company was quite in harmony with Paul's gospel, but not at all so with Jewish prejudice. At Ephesus, Paul and Trophimus might have walked in company without exciting any suspicion - not so in Jerusalem. For a Jew and a Gentile to be seen together in Jerusalem was regarded as an open insult to Jewish dignity. It was a throwing down of the middle wall of partition, and boldly walking across the ruins. For this the Jews were not prepared. They gazed upon the two companions with an eye of dark suspicion. And the strange companionship fanned that flame which so speedily burst forth with terrible vehemence around the beloved Apostle of the Gentiles.

And one is disposed to ask why these two friends should be found in the streets of Jerusalem. Those streets were evidently not Paul's appointed sphere of labor. "Far hence unto the Gentiles" was to him the Master's word. But Paul would go to Jerusalem, and when there he could never refuse to walk in company with the Ephesian. He was too honest for that. He could not, like Peter, "stand aloof" from his Gentile brother for fear of the Jews. But then, the ceremonies of the temple and the company of Trophimus could never be harmonized. Here was the difficulty. If the institutions of the temple were to be honored and maintained, then why this companionship and fellowship with an uncircumcised stranger? If Paul and Trophimus were both enrolled as fellow citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, then why acknowledge in principle the old system of things, dividing them?

These reflections throw a peculiar interest around the name of Trophimus. It is deeply interesting and instructive just to look at the three passages in which his name occurs. First, we find Trophimus as one of a band of companions who accompanied Paul into Asia (Acts 20:4). Then we find him in company with the Apostle in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 21:29). And last, we find him laid on a sickbed at Miletum. Here the curtain drops upon him. Here, he is seen as an invalid at Miletum, and Paul is now a prisoner at Rome. But both could with undimmed eye look forward to that bright and blessed world above, to which they were both hastening onward, and where they are now safely housed with Christ whom they loved and served here.

The Tongue

The first and most sifting index of the inner man is the tongue. A man who appears to be in relationship with God and to honor Him, yet who cannot bridle his tongue, deceives himself, and his religion is vain (Jas. 1:26).

Pure religion before God and the Father is to care for those who, reached in the tenderest relationships by the wages of sin, are deprived of their natural supports, and to keep oneself untainted by the world (Jas. 1:27).

The tongue is the proof whether the new man is in action, whether nature and self-will are under restraint.... Where there is divine life, knowledge does not display itself in mere words, but in the walk and by works in which the meekness of true wisdom will be seen. Bitterness and contention are not the fruits of a wisdom that comes from above, but are earthly, of the nature of a man, and of the enemy.

The wisdom that comes from above, having its place in the life, in the heart, has three characteristics. First of all, the character of purity, for the heart is in communion with God - has intercourse with Him. Next, it is peaceable, gentle, ready to yield to the will of another. Then, full of good works, acting by a principle which, as its origin and motives are from above, does good without partiality; that is to say, its action is not guided by the circumstances which influence the flesh and the passions of men. For the same reason it is sincere and unfeigned. Purity, absence of will and self, activity in good, such are the characteristics of heavenly wisdom (see Jas. 3:17).

These directions to bridle the tongue, as the first movement and expression of the will of the natural man, extend to believers. There are not to be (as to the inward disposition of the man) many teachers (see Jas. 3:1). We all fail, and to teach others and fail ourselves only increases our condemnation. For vanity can easily be fed in teaching others, and that is a very different thing from having the life quickened by the power of truth. The Holy Ghost bestows His gifts as He pleases. The Apostle speaks here of the propensity in any one to teach, not of the gift he may have received for teaching.

Trust in Him at All Times

Psalm 62:8

God always desires us to trust in Him, and He is at all times worthy of our trust. Let us trust Him, and we shall conquer our fears; patiently endure our trials; successfully pursue our work; rise above our cares, and overcome our foes.

That we may trust Him, He has revealed His character, pledged His word, told us that He will not be wroth with us, and assured us that He is unchangeable.

"O may we with a steady faith

Believe whate'er Jehovah saith!

At all times trust our heavenly Friend,

And on His faithful Word depend."

The Urgency of Grace

Luke 14

Grace is characteristic of the Gospel of Luke, and a very striking illustration of its urgency is found in the parable of the great supper. When the supper is prepared, it is simply said that its provider "bade," or "invited," many; and hence, when the servant goes forth, his message to those that were bidden is only, "Come." After, however, these had all refused the invitation they had received, "The master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor," etc. Then last, when it was reported that "yet there is room," the servant was commissioned to "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

This gradation in the nature of the message-"come," "bring in," and "compel them to come in"-is most instructive.

A word or two will explain. Adopting the usually received interpretation, which we fully endorse-that the first invitation is to the Jewish nation as such; the second, to the remnant, consequent upon the rejection of Christ by "His own"; and the third, to the Gentiles - we learn that the activity of the heart of God was only intensified by the wickedness of man. It was in grace surely, though in fulfillment of promise, that Christ was presented to the Jew; and it might have been thought that, when that grace was slighted and contemned, God would have retreated, so to speak, from man altogether, into the circle of His own blessedness. But it was not so; for His heart yearned to bless the objects of His counsels of love and redemption, and therefore He, by the power of the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel at Pentecost in Jerusalem, "brought in" the poor of the flock. Nor did this satisfy the extent of His desires; for from that day to this, and from this day till the coming of the Lord, He has been working, and will work, to "compel" poor sinners to come in; and He will not rest until His house is filled - until there is not an empty place left.

It might be a profitable question for many of us, whether we are in the power of this compelling urgency of grace in dealing with those who are not saved. For it should never be forgotten, that every believer is intended to be the expression of the heart of God to the world. Another question might be put; that is, whether the feeble results of the preaching of the gospel in many places may not be traced to a want of apprehension of the nature of the grace that is now going forth toward sinners. This once understood, there would be no expectation from earnestness or appeals, or from anything whatever, save from the power of the Spirit of God. He alone can compel sinners to come in.

The Watcher and the Holy One

Daniel 4

The present is a moment of great significance in the world's history. We often speak of other days as having been strongly characterized, and as of high importance in the progress of the way of man, and in the unfolding of the purposes of God. Were we but in the due position, so as to look at them aright, the present would be seen by us as equal to any of them in importance and in meaning.

Man is preparing that great exhibition of himself, whereby the whole world is to be ensnared and deceived to its final utter ruin. Such a condition of things has already had many a miniature resemblance; and nothing has escaped the snare but "the mind of Christ"; that is, the man of God led by the Spirit through the spacious and commanding delusion.

There was, in other days, a tree whose leaves were fair and whose fruit was much, the height of which reached unto heaven, and the sight of it to the end of all the earth, the beasts of the field had shadow under it, the birds of the air dwelt in the boughs of it, and all flesh fed on it. It was, after this manner, the admiration and the boast of all; their desire was toward it; and the heart of the man who planted it affected it as his glory and joy. "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" said the King Nebuchadnezzar.

Thus was it, this fair luxuriant tree. All flesh was content, and man's heart feasted on it; the ends of the earth gazed at it; and thus it got its sanction from all that was in man or of man.

In a little space, however, heaven visited it; and it was altogether another thing in the judgment of heaven. The Watcher and the Holy One came down, as the Lord Himself had done in the still earlier days of Babel and of Sodom; and this visitor Y. from heaven inspected this tree of beautiful wondrous growth.

But with Him it was no object of admiration or worship. He was not moved to desire its beauty. In His thoughts it was not a tree good for food, or pleasant to the eye, or desirable for any end, as it was in the thoughts of all flesh. He looked on it as on a thing ripe for righteous judgment, and He said of it, "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit" (Dan. 4:14).

This was solemn, in a moment of common universal exaltation, when the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and all flesh, were glorying in the thing which heaven was thus dooming to destruction. But Daniel among men in that day was one who had the mind of heaven, the mind of the Watcher and the Holy One respecting this tree-but such as he only. For the saint on the earth has the mind of heaven in him. This is our place. All flesh may feed on that of which faith, or the mind of Christ in us, sees the end under the sure judgment of God.

This is so; and may we experience it! But moral danger and temptation beset our hearts. "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). And the

saint in these days is in great danger of having more of the mind of man in him than that of God. Look at even such a one as Samuel. When Eliab stood before him, he said, "Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him." But he looked where the Lord did not look. He eyed the countenance of the man, and the height of his stature, while the Lord eyed the heart. And we are in danger (in these days of both religious and secular attractions) of mistaking Eliab again for the Lord's anointed. Paul was held in some contempt at Corinth because of his "bodily presence," which was "weak." He was no Eliab. He was wanting in "outward appearance" (see 1 Sam. 16:7; 2 Cor. 10:7), and even the disciples at Corinth were beguiled away from him.

All this is warning to us in this solemn and significant day, when man's exaltation of himself is growing apace, and things are judged of by the mind of man, and in their bearing on the advancement of the world.

But, again, when the disciples were held in admiration, religious admiration, of the buildings of the temple, we have a like occasion of the rebuke which the mind of man met from the mind of God. "As He went out of the temple, one of His disciples saith unto Him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Mark 13:1, 2.

This has the same moral character in it. It is the erring judgment of man, spending its delight and wonder on what the righteous judgment of God has already and solemnly announced. The Lord (may I say?) was as the Watcher and the Holy One of the prophet, delivering the sentence of heaven upon the boast and pride of the heart of man, found too in the place of religion. And again, I ask, has not this a voice in the ear of this present generation?

The case, however, which above all has fixed my mind at this time, is that in Luke 19, where the multitude are following the Lord on His way from Jericho to Jerusalem. We are there told of them, that "they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear."

This tells us again of the expectation of man's heart. The people judged that the present scene, the world as in man's hand, could get its sanction from God. The kingdom, they thought, would be set up at once. But this can never be. Christ cannot adopt man's world. Through repentance and faith man must take up with Christ's world, and not think that Christ can take up with his. The kingdom cannot come till judgment shall have cleared the scene of man's iniquities and pollutions. But this is not what man calculates on at all. He judges that the kingdom may immediately appear-appear, or be set up, without any purifying, any change - all that is wanting is advancement a few steps farther, as from Jericho to Jerusalem, a little more progress in the growing scene, and all will be the kingdom fit for God's adoption.

This is the mind of this present generation - like those who, in this chapter in Luke, "thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Things are so advanced, so refined, so cultivated by a multitude of fresh energies, moral, religious, and scientific, that under the success and progress of such energies, the world will do for Christ in a very little while. But no, it is man's world still; and this will never do for Christ. You may sweep and garnish the house, but it is the house of the old owner still; and, for all the pains spent upon it, only the more fit for the old owner's designs, and in nowise one single bit more suited to God's great and glorious purposes.

Jesus goes up to Jerusalem. But He finds there a field of thorns and briars; there were money changers, and sellers of doves in the temple of God. The house of prayer was a den of thieves. The rulers, chief priests, and scribes, were seeking to destroy the Just One. The religion of the place was chief in the offense. Jesus wept over it; instead of all being ready for the kingdom appearing immediately, all was but ready for judgment, for the stones crying out immediately. And thus, the city, as Jesus said of it, was soon to be entrenched and encompassed, and laid even with the ground, instead of being the habitation of glory, and the witness of the kingdom of God.

I ask myself, Has not all this a voice for our ears in this generation? "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Jesus, as a Holy One and a Watcher again on this occasion, as in Matt. 24:1, 2, inspected the fair tree of man's worship and joy, and in spirit said, "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit." And so is my soul deeply assured He is doing at this moment, touching all the progress and advancement and boasted toils and successes of this present hour. He that sits in the heavens has another thought of it all than men vainly imagine. He is not about to sanction, but to judge the world in this its day (a day near at hand) of loftiest advancement and exaltation.

Watching and Waiting

Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord.

... Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching." Luke 12:36, 37.

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

There seems, however, to be something more earnest and definite in watching than in waiting, though all who are watching are also waiting for Him. We can understand three persons having heard that a well-known friend is expected to land at a certain seaport. One of them seems much interested at the thought, but it does not produce any alteration in his walk and ways. He knows his friend is coming, and is satisfied with the knowledge of it. The second man is so affected by the sure tidings of his friend's return, that he goes to meet him. He soon finds his way to the seaport, and determines there to remain till his friend comes. He is waiting. Day after day passes, and the friend has not come. Still he waits. Though he is often seen occupying his time and means in self-pleasing, he waits on day by day thinking often of his friend, and his interests. But the third man not only goes to the seaport and awaits the arrival of his coming friend, but he looks over the sea many times a day, makes inquiry as to every vessel, and carefully inspects the passengers to see if his friend is among them. This one is watching.

Our Lord would have the hope of His coming so real in us that it should stir our hearts to go out to meet Him -to be watching as well as waiting, and that not on special occasions merely, but as the posture of our souls continually, thus giving a color, unconsciously perhaps, yet nevertheless really, to all our ways. Nothing can be more practical or more eminently sanctifying - "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." 1 John 3:3. This is more than knowledge of doctrine, for it is divine truth received into the heart in faith, so that the heart goes out after the Lord Himself with longing desire and expectation of seeing Him; it is the "blessed hope" of our souls, and He would have us "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." This "hope," then, when it is a reality in our hearts, "purifieth" even as He is pure. It purifies not according to the low standard of Christendom's estimate of Christianity, but owns no standard of purity but Christ - "as He is pure." It teaches us to separate ourselves from everything, whether men call it good or bad, that is unsuited to His mind who is the "holy" and the "true." May He graciously strengthen this hope in us!

Those who are able to go back fifty years or more in marking the ways of God, cannot have forgotten the striking effects of the preaching of the Lord's coming at that time. Those who announced the midnight cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him," carried conviction to the hearers by their walk and ways, that they were themselves getting ready to meet

Him. It was the coming of the Lord Himself they had before them. Then it was not so much a question of doctrine, but of meeting Him. One and another saw it plainly taught in the Word as the blessed hope of the Church, and marveled that it had been lost so long. Many received the truth in faith, and therefore acted on it. Like the Thessalonian believers, they waited for God's Son from heaven. The Lord Himself was their hope and expectation. So plainly and solemnly was He set forth as quickly coming, both in preaching and teaching, that sinners were aroused in conscience, and cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" and believers almost everywhere were aroused from slumber.

Wherever the testimony went forth, there was almost always an awakening, though it was resisted by some of the wise of this world, and ridiculed by others. Many believers were so stirred in heart and conscience as to desire in all their ways to be "found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:14). It was to them truly a purifying hope. At whatever cost to themselves, they felt the perceptive teaching of Scripture to "do all to the glory of God" must be carried out; so that a deep, heart-searching inquiry was awakened in souls in many places as to whether they were ready, not merely as to title, but as to walk and service, to meet the Bridegroom. It was not death they looked for, not judgment, but the Lord Himself, their loving Bridegroom, to take His loved ones to be forever with Himself.

The effects were such as might have been expected. Many felt they were in positions and circumstances which were not for the glory of God, and gave them up.

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

The Way of the Love of Jesus

The more perfect love is, the more entirely and without distraction will it regard its object; and this will give it at different times a very different bearing, because its ways will be determined by the condition and need of its object. Its way, therefore, at times may appear harsh and decisive, as when the Lord rebuked Peter in Matthew 16, or when He reproved the two disciples in Luke 24. But this is only because love is perfect, and therefore is undistractedly considering its object.

Imperfect love will show itself otherwise-more attractively at times, but far, far intrinsically less true, because imperfect love will not in this way unmixedly consider its object, but itself - it will be set upon enjoying its object rather than serving it; and this will give it a more considerate and tender bearing at times, and get for itself great credit, while perfect love has all the while forgotten itself and its enjoyments, and ordered its course and its actings in more undistracted concern and desire to have another blessed and profited.

Where do we see the perfect love but in Jesus, in God! A mother has it not, but will at times enjoy her child; but Jesus had it. He considered His disciples when He was one with them; He ordered His way with them to their profit, and not to His own gratification. He will gratify Himself with them in that coming age, when He need no longer care for them as in a place of instruction and discipline. He will then have no occasion, in the exercise of perfect love, to consider only their profit; for their profit will have been brought to its accomplishment in that place of their Lord's delight in them.

What Is It to Quench the Spirit?

The allowance of flesh in the least degree in a Christian is to grieve the Spirit of God by which he has been sealed until the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). What a motive to holiness is the fact-true of every believer - that the Holy Spirit of God dwells in him! He may, alas, grieve Him in many ways. Rejection of light which God has given, worldliness, in fact everything that has not Christ for its motive and object must grieve God's Spirit - hinder our growth and communion.

To quench the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19) is to hinder His free action in the members of Christ in the assembly. While there are special permanent gifts in the Church (Eph. 4:11), there are also the "joints and bands," which work effectually in the measure of every part, and by which the body of Christ increases. If they are hindered in true spiritual service - a single word for instance-the Spirit of God is quenched.

There are dangers to be avoided on both sides, specially by those who seek to walk in the truth of the Church of God. On one side the danger is, that because there is liberty "that all may learn, and all may be comforted," there may be the undervaluing of special ministry, which is a permanent thing as long as the Church of God is here. On the other, there is the danger of quenching the Spirit in the various helps, and joints, and bands by which nourishment is ministered in the body of Christ, by putting special ministry in the place of the free action of the Holy Ghost in the members of Christ; both are to be cherished, and the most spiritual are those who will value all that God gives.

The following verses (1 Thess. 5:20, 21) show that it is ministry the Apostle has in his mind. While in verse 12 he exhorts them to own those who labor among them and esteem them highly in love for their work's sake, in verses 19-21 they were not to quench the Spirit in any, but at the same time to "prove all things" which were said, and "hold fast that which is good."

What Is Our Power for Walk?

This question was recently addressed to us, and, as it may be helpful to others, we propose to answer it somewhat in detail. That the difficulty may be first understood, we give the exact form in which it was put: Is Christ or the Holy Spirit our power for walk? Now, before we take it up in this way, it may be well to point out, what all will admit, that Christ is our example in His walk through this world. This is stated, indeed, distinctly by the Apostle John. He writes, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." 1 John 2:6. And if all the scriptures which speak of the example of Christ are collected, it will be seen that they are used in a twofold way - either, as John, to point out God's standard for the believer (see 1 Pet. 2:18-25); or to encourage us in following in His steps (Heb. 12), where Christ is set forth as the Leader and Completer of faith; as a perfect example of dependence from beginning to end; as One who died a martyr's death (though His death was much more than this); and we are exhorted to have His walk before our souls as an encouragement to a like endurance in the path of faith. "Ye," says the Apostle, "have not yet resisted unto blood" (as He did), "striving against sin."

Every believer will assent to these statements; and the question then now comes, By what power is such a walk to be attained? One or two scriptures will give us the needed information. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. 8:13, 14. Again, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Gal. 5:25. Two things are here plainly taught: first, that the hindrance (if we may so put it) to our walking as Christ walked, lies in the deeds of the body, or, as in Galatians, in the flesh which always lusts against the Spirit, and seeks to reassert its control over the child of God; and second, that the only power by which the flesh can be held in check - kept in the place of death, according to the judgment of God upon it in the cross of Christ - is the Holy Spirit. There is also the additional instruction, that we may be led of the Spirit; that is, that He is not only our power for repression, for the mortification of our members (Col. 3), but He also enables us to walk - is therefore our power for progress in the divine path. We must hold by these teachings most tenaciously, because we thereby learn that we have absolutely no natural resource, that we are shut up entirely to the energy of the Holy Ghost for conflict and walk, as for every activity of the divine life.

This then, at first sight, would seem to settle the question at the head of our article. But there is another consideration; and this, if truly comprehended, will go to the root of the difficulty which is felt by so many souls. For, be it observed, that though it be accepted that the Holy Spirit is our only power for walk, the question may still arise, How then is it that He does not enable us to follow Christ more energetically? There are numbers of truehearted saints who long to be like Caleb, but who are disappointed at every step they take. They do follow, but instead of doing so fully, they feel that they are rather like Peter, following afar off.

Now it will help all such to understand that, notwithstanding they possess the spirit of adoption, and are thus sealed, He will be inoperative, put forth no energy, unless the eye is on Christ; that is,

unless Christ is constantly before the soul as the Object of faith. As the Apostle says, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). That is, his faith had Christ as the Son of God as its Object - Christ glorified at the right hand of God, glorified as man, but withal the Son of God, being ever, in this connection, the true and proper Object of faith. He Himself said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1). And when we are living every hour, yea, moment by moment, in dependence, Christ, as so exhibited, filling the vision of our souls, the Object of our contemplation, the Spirit of God is ungrieved, and leads us on by His mighty power, so that the divine life which has been bestowed upon us flows out in the same channels, whatever the difference of volume, as those in which the life of Christ found expression when He was here in this world. It is on this account indeed that the Spirit is termed in Rom. 8:9 the Spirit of Christ.

This also explains another difficulty. To walk like Christ, it is sometimes asked, Must we look at Him in His earthly pathway, or as seated at the right hand of God? We have already explained the uses made of the example of Christ in the Scriptures; and it will be readily seen that it is not Christ on earth, but Christ glorified, who is the Object of our faith. It is, of course, the same Christ, but Christ as He now is, in the condition of glory - not as He was "after the flesh" - that is always presented to our souls. We study the life of Christ as displayed in this scene to learn how He acted - comported Himself in the different circumstances through which He passed - and our souls are drawn out in adoring wonder as we behold the manifestations of His perfections, graces, and excellencies. But we know Him now only as glorified (see 2 Cor. 5); and it is therefore to Him as such, we repeat, that we now look.

Together with this is connected another thing. Contemplating the glory of the Lord, which shines forth without a veil, we are gradually transformed by the power of the Spirit - gradually, because it is from glory to glory - into the likeness of the One with whom we are thus occupied. And the same Spirit, who is the power of our transformation while our eyes are upon Christ, works mightily within us for exhibition of Christ in our walk. Walking as Christ walked is not, therefore, external imitation, but the display of the inner life, in proportion as we are changed into the same image, in and through us, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

We do not add more for the present; but our readers will see that, when we speak of power for walk, we cannot separate Christ from the Holy Spirit. I might scripturally say, with the Apostle, I can do all things through Him (doubtless, Christ) who strengthens me, for He is both my life and my strength (Col. 3; 2 Cor. 12). And I can also scripturally say, It is through the Spirit alone I can mortify the deeds of the body. So in the life of our blessed Lord. He acted and wrought, and at the same time all that He did was by the Holy Ghost.

Women's Place in Service

Matt. 27:55, 56, etc.

The part that women take in all this history is very instructive, especially to them. The activity of public service, that which may be called "work," belongs naturally to men (all that appertains to what is generally termed ministry), although women share a very precious activity in private.

But there is another side of Christian life which is particularly theirs, and that is personal and loving devotedness to Christ. It was a woman who anointed the Lord while the disciples murmured; women who were at the cross when all except John had forsaken Him; women who came to the sepulcher, and who were sent to announce the truth to the apostles, who had gone after all to their own home; women who ministered to the Lord's need.

And indeed this goes farther. Devotedness in service is perhaps the part of man; but the instinct of affection, that which enters more intimately into Christ's position, and is thus more immediately in connection with His sentiments, in closer communion with the sufferings of His heart - this is the happy part of woman.

The activity of service for Christ puts man a little out of this position, at least if the Christian is not watchful. Everything, however, has its place. I speak of that which is characteristic; for there are women who have served much, and men who have felt much. Note also here, what I believe I have remarked, that this clinging of heart to Jesus is the position where the communications of true knowledge are received. The first full gospel was announced to the poor woman that was a sinner, who washed His feet; the embalming for His death to Mary; our highest position to Mary Magdalene; the communion Peter desired, to John who was in His bosom. And here the women have a large share.

Be Ye Steadfast, Unmoveable

If our hearts are not close to Christ, we are apt to get weary in the way.

All is a vain show around us, but that which is inside abides and is true, being the life of Christ. All else goes! When the heart gets hold of this fact, it becomes (as to things around) like one taken into a house to work for the day, who performs the duties well, but passes through instead of living in the circumstances. To Israel, the cloud came down, and they stayed; it lifted up, and on they went. It was all the same to them. Why? Because had they stayed when the cloud went on, they would not have had the Lord. One may be daily at the desk for fifty years, yet with Christ; the desk is only the circumstance. It is the doing God's will, making manifest the savor of Christ, which is the simple and great thing. Whether I go or you go, I stay or you stay, may that one word be realized in each of us - "steadfast, unmovable"! In whatever sphere, as matter of providence, we may be found, let the divine life be manifested - Christ manifested. This abides. All else changes, but the life remains and abides forever-aye, forever.

Not a single thing in which we have served Christ shall be forgotten. Lazy, alas! we all are in service; but all shall come out that is real, and what is real is Christ in us, and this only. The appearance now may be very little - not much even in a religious view -but what is real will abide. Our hearts clinging closely to Christ, we shall sustain one another in the body of Christ. The love of Christ shall hold the whole together, Christ being everywhere, and we content to be nothing, helping one another praying one for the other. I ask not for the prayers of the saints; I reckon on them. The Lord keep us going on in simplicity, fulfilling as the hireling our day, till Christ shall come; and then "shall every man have praise of God" - praise of God! Be that our object, and may God knit all our hearts together thoroughly and eternally.

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