

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 21

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A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 21, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

113 Chapters

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Christian Truth Volume 21

2 Corinthians 12:9

When God makes strength perfect in weakness, the question comes, Who is the doer of everything? This took place in Paul when he was first converted; this was the principle he was first put on - You are not to trust, Paul, to your own strength, or wisdom, or anything; but you are to trust Me. Paul got locked up in prison, and despaired of life; but it was not God's thought that His Apostle should be stopped. When he was quietly conning over it all, he said, I had "sentence of death" in myself, etc. Paul had before him the God that raised up the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 1:9.)

Was it a great thing for the God who had raised the Lord Jesus, who had shone down into Paul's heart, to open his prison bars? Christ was crucified in weakness; He lives by the power of God-strength made perfect in weakness. The expression at the close of verse 9 should be "tabernacle upon me"; the thought conveyed to my soul is a reference to God dwelling in a pillar of fire, and the cloud keeping company with people all through their journey in the wilderness. Paul was to go forth as one who had no strength, but as one whose weakness is used of God for the display of His glory; and there we find Paul singing a song over Satan. I glory in my infirmities; he finds he can bear nothing of himself, perfect weakness; but now he has got the secret of victory from the Lord, and he can sing a song over his weakness and over Satan; and he finds Satan's work has been turned into his good. The Lord has allowed it, all for his blessing.

Now the question is, Will Christ's arm be always underneath me? Will He ever tabernacle over me? Will He never fail me? Shall I be always able to sing this song? This is the principle of resurrection which quiets and gives peace. Paul was to wear it inside him all day long, through his whole course. Resurrection must be applied to our every circumstance. "Crucified with Christ," "quickened us together," "raised us up together, and made us to sit together in," etc. Through all your life, Paul, you are to take this principle into your bosom; resurrection, strength made perfect in weakness.

One word, and it is not a strained word: I have often thought of the wilderness through which God brought Israel. His eye was on the wilderness. He prepared it. In substance He says, I have made the place for a particular purpose in connection with My people; I have arranged it long ago. The wilderness was no accident; it was the very place He had prepared. No 'resources to nature; absolute dependence on God there. And God has made and marked out your circumstances, and has so made them that you cannot go through them without Himself. Some may say in reference to their path, This thing came upon me through the sin of someone else. Never mind that; it came from God. Neither divine wisdom nor power could have added anything to the wilderness to have made it more impassable to nature or more easy to God. He allows a quantity of things in our circumstances to make us feel we cannot go through them without Him. What an immense difference in saying, This thing comes from God;

He has put it there, and, All this is against me. If it is I and God, there is no difficulty; if we leave Him out, the way is impassable. Which would you rather have, a life without difficulty, or a life so

full of difficulty that the blessed Lord Jesus is obliged to show His face every day, yes, every minute, obliged to keep close to me all day long?

God so ordered the course of the Apostle that it was impossible to get on without the Lord Jesus who raises the dead; and this does not merely apply to moral difficulties, but to everything. There is someone sick in the house; who do you turn to first, God or the doctor? When the doctor thinks it a serious case, you take it as a decision; but the question is not what the doctor says, but what is God's purpose? Means may be used, but the Christian is not to use anything apart from God - the Lord first in everything. I do not think praise ever comes forth from us so purely as in connection with what is disagreeable. When we give thanks for mercies, it is not so pure as when able to praise for what we do not like; we should be dropping the sweet into the disagreeable. When we think of the Lord's love in it, it sweetens what is bitter.

The life of Paul was a wonderful life. "To me to live is Christ." The way he did run his course brought out the fellowship of the life of Christ; he had in Caesar's court the very life the Lord Jesus had on the Father's throne. It is wonderful, and all on the principle, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Exposition of 2 Timothy

Chapter 2:8-13

The transition from a consideration of the needed personal qualifications for the work to which Timothy was called to the motives which would sustain him is in the highest degree significant. In one word, the Apostle sets Timothy down in the presence of the Lord - "Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel" (I believe this to be a more accurate translation). The difference is important; for, taking them as they stand in the original, it is at once perceived that "Jesus Christ raised from the dead" is the prominent thought, and also more especially connected with the words, "according to my gospel." For it was indeed the gospel of the glory of Christ, "who is the image of God," that was committed to Paul (2 Cor. 3:4), the gospel that proclaimed that Jesus Christ, the Christ who had been here and was crucified, had been raised from the dead and glorified as man at the right hand of God, having the glory of God displayed in His face. The expression, "of the seed of David," tells us that Christ was true man, and what He was on earth in His presentation to the Jews.

In the epistle to the Romans the same two things, if not in the same order, are linked together. Giving them as they really stand, we read, "The gospel of God,... concerning His Son,... which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," "Jesus Christ our Lord." Chap. 1:1-4.

As to the force of the combination of these two aspects in Timothy - Jesus Christ raised from the dead, and His being of the seed of David - we may give the language of another:

"The truth of the gospel (dogma is not the subject here) was divided into two parts,... the fulfillment of the promises, and the power of God in resurrection. These, in fact, are, as it were, the two pivots of the truth - God faithful to His promises (shown especially in connection with the Jews), and God mighty to produce an entirely new thing by His creative and quickening power as manifested in the resurrection, which also put the seal of God upon the 'Person and work of Christ.'" It was Jesus Christ, therefore, in all this wide-embracing character, as born into this world of the seed of David, but as having been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, that Timothy was to remember to have ever before his soul, as containing the whole truth of his message, and as supplying him with an all-powerful motive for fidelity and endurance in his work.

This was, as we have seen, Paul's gospel; and now we learn once again (see chap. 1:8-12) that its proclamation entailed persecution. He thus continues: "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound." v. 9. This was true at the moment of the Apostle's writing, and we have only to read the record of his activity in The Acts to discover, as indeed was testified to him by the Holy Ghost, that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every city. Bearing the precious message of the gospel, the ministry of reconciliation, and, as an ambassador for Christ, as though God did beseech by him, entreating men everywhere to be reconciled to God,

not only was his message constantly refused, but he himself was looked upon as a disturber of the world's peace, and, finally, was shut up in prison as a malefactor! So completely, however, did the Apostle lose sight of himself in his concern for the interests of God in the gospel, that he found his consolation in the recollection that, if he were in captivity, the word of God could not be confined. A like contrast is often found in The Acts. In chapter 12 Herod puts James the brother of John to death, and "proceeded further to take Peter also." But this very activity of the enemy brought in the interposition of God. Peter is delivered from his captivity, Herod is smitten, and then the significant statement is added, "But the word of God grew and multiplied." v. 24. In such ways, when the enemy deals proudly, God steps in and shows that He is above him.

Paul has even a deeper consolation: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." v. 10. It has often been remarked that the Lord Himself might have used these words, and hence only one in the enjoyment of fellowship with the Lord's own heart as to His people could employ such language; for, in truth, the object of the Lord's own sufferings was the salvation of His people. He suffered, as we all know, as no other could, because He made expiation for our sins; but the point of the Apostle's statement is not the character but the object of his sufferings.

By the grace of God, therefore, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, he was enabled to suffer all that came upon him, in connection with his testimony, for the elect's sake. He was made willing, nay more; with something of the love of Christ for His people animating his soul, he even desired to endure persecution if so be they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with all that was connected with it, even eternal glory. And it should be ever remembered that the same path is opened to every servant of the Lord. If smaller vessels than the Apostle, they may yet have the same desires, aims, and objects; and they will have them just in proportion as the affections of Christ fill their hearts.

Intense love for His people, because they are His people, is one of the most essential qualifications for service; for this will become, in the power of the Holy Ghost, the spring of unwearying devotedness to Christ for their eternal welfare.

In verses 9 and 10 the Apostle seeks to encourage Timothy in an evil day by a reference to his own path, and by the exhibition of the motives which, through grace, governed his own soul. He now proceeds to remind him of certain divine principles, or of certain infallible consequences resulting both from identification with, and from unfaithfulness to, Christ in His rejection.

"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us: if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." vv. 11-13.

The exact significance of "It is a faithful saying," or, literally, "faithful is the word," is not at once perceived. It may be the solemn asseveration of the truth of the following sentences; or it might mean that these truths were current among the saints, and that the Apostle takes them up to apply them to the matter in hand. To Timothy they would, at such a moment, have great force and solemnity. Tempted at least to shrink from the cross involved in his service, nothing could be more reasonable than to be recalled to the truth, that if we have died with Christ, we shall also live with Him.

Now death with Christ lies at the very foundation of our Christian position; but blessed as it is in delivering us from all that would enslave us in this scene, it involves certain responsibilities. The Apostle thus wrote to the Colossians: "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" Chap. 2:20. Having been associated with Christ in His death involved their acceptance of the place of death in this world. So with Timothy, with us all. If we take the place of being dead, no persecutions, no dangers, could turn us aside from the path of service. It will moreover encourage us always to consider ourselves dead, and to bear about in the body the dying of Jesus, to remember that our living together with Him is the divine consequence of association with Him in death. For, as the Apostle says elsewhere, "If we have been planted together in [identified with] the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Rom. 6:5.

It is the same with the next statement: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (v. 12). Not that our reigning with Christ is in any way dependent upon our present suffering, but rather it is that suffering here is the appointed path for those who will be associated with Christ in His kingdom. This was shown out in type in the direction that the purple cloth was to be spread upon the altar before it, with its vessels, and was covered with badgers' skins for its transport through the wilderness. In like manner we read that "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." Rom. 8:17.

Being what we are, and the world, the flesh, and the devil being what they are, suffering with Christ is a necessity, and especially in the path of service; but if it is so, He sustains us by the prospect of association with Himself in the glories of the kingdom.

These are encouragements, but there are also warnings. Should we, alas! deny Him (and denying Him here has its full force of absolute apostasy), He will deny us. (See Luke 12:9.) If, moreover, we believe not, the Lord will not fail to accomplish all the purposes of His heart, all the thoughts of His love; for He cannot deny Himself. He is in no way dependent upon our fidelity or service, though He may be pleased to bestow upon us the privilege of being His servants, of laboring in His vineyard.

Daunted by constant opposition, we may be disheartened, fall into despondency, be tempted to think that the light of the testimony is altogether extinguished, and thus come under the power of doubt and unbelief. But the Lord will work on, in spite of all our faithlessness, in the accomplishment of His will, and in His own time will infallibly present the Church to Himself, "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

The knowledge then that God is faithful, and that He cannot deny Himself, is assuredly a rock on which the feeblest and most timid of His servants may repose in the darkest moments; and it affords also an encouragement to look beyond the confusion and the ruin, to that blessed future when every thought of the heart of God for His Church and for His people will have its perfect and eternal realization in the glory.

Exposition of 2 Timothy

Chapter 2:14-19

The following exhortations are for Timothy's own guidance as a teacher, and consequently for the instruction of all who, divinely qualified, may seek to edify the people of God. "Of these things," the Apostle says, "put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." v. 14. The "these things" will refer to verses 11-13, the divine truths which abide through all changes and all phases of the condition of the Church, inasmuch as they are bound up with the Lord's moral nature, and therefore with the very essence of Christianity. They can therefore never be forgotten without damage, and unless indeed there is an open departure from the faith. It is on this account that Timothy is urged to keep them continually before the minds of the saints; and at the same time he was to charge them to testify earnestly before the Lord that they should avoid all word contentions (logomachy), which, instead of edification, tended to the subversion of the hearers.

Jewish believers were under great temptation to this kind of discussion, for they had been accustomed to hear their rabbis exhibit their argumentative skill in reasonings upon the value even of the letters that composed the words of Scripture. And whenever spiritual life and energy decline, Christian teachers fall also into the snare of entertaining their hearers with ingenious and fanciful interpretations, drawn from historical details, or from types and figures, instead of ministering Christ. Let it then be observed that such discussions are not only "to no profit," but they also actually turn aside those that listen. Alas! when believers, like the Israelites, become weary of the heaven-sent manna, there are always those at hand who will seek to gratify the palate of nature.

It is in contrast to all this that Paul proceeds: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." v. 15. There are two things in this exhortation. First, Timothy is to use diligence to commend himself, not to his hearers, but to God. This principle is the safeguard of all who are engaged in public service. As the Apostle says elsewhere, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). And again, "As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts." 1 Thess. 2:4. Nothing else will keep the servants of God but to have Him before their souls, for then they will remember in all their service that it is His verdict of approval alone they have to seek. (Compare 2 Cor. 2:17.)

Second, Timothy is to approve himself to God by being a good workman. It would be possible for a servant to really strive to commend himself to God, and yet, through ignorance of the truth, to be a bad workman. How many godly, devoted men, for example, have had their eyes opened to perceive (and with what sorrow has the discovery been made!) that they had been misleading souls for years! It is not only necessary therefore to be godly, to have a single eye, but there must be also that knowledge of the Lord's mind, as revealed in the Scriptures, which will enable those who are in the place of teachers to rightly divide, to cut in a straight line, the word of truth. Diligence is requisite for this-diligence in the prayerful study of the Word-and it is this which is really enjoined upon Timothy. Ability to teach is a divine gift; to be a good workman is the result of study, training, and practice, in dependence upon the power of the Holy Ghost.

He was to be occupied with the Word. "But" he is told to "shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." vv. 16-18. There is no more successful snare of Satan

than the seduction of the Lord's servants into foolish controversies. To contend for the truth in a day of departure from it is one of their first responsibilities; but this is a very different thing from turning aside to verbal discussions and "doubtful disputations," or, as the Apostle here expresses it, "empty voices"-words or sounds without significance for the believer. It can never indeed be too often asserted that the best way to refute error is by the statement of the truth; and controversy conducted in this way will edify both speaker and hearers, while profane and vain babblings will only tend to produce more impiety, because they harden both the heart and conscience.

Not only so, but their word-that is, the word of those who fall into these babblings-will eat as doth a canker, or, more exactly, spread as a gangrene. A gangrene is an eating sore which, gradually spreading, almost always ends in mortification. No more striking figure to set forth the danger of "vain babblings" could possibly be employed.

That Timothy might not be left in doubt as to his meaning, the Apostle cites the illustrative cases of Hymenaeus and Philetus. These had, it would seem, the place of teachers, and had fallen into the grievous error, not of denying the resurrection, but of declaring that it was already past. It may be well to call special attention to this subtle form of false teaching, for there are many believers of the present day who are liable to be betrayed by the speciousness of a seeming super-spirituality. And the teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus had this pretentious character, for they made the resurrection a spiritual thing: and it is quite possible that they based their contention on Ephesians 2, where we read that God has quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, etc. But "concerning the truth" they erred (literally, "missed the mark") and the effect was to overthrow the faith of some. "The faith" here is used for the thing believed; and thus these false teachers really turned souls aside from the truth, led them away from what they had previously professed to believe. It is not a question of salvation; but for the time, at least, these misguided ones surrendered the truth, becoming the prey of their deluded leaders. Can anything be more sad than to be used of Satan to lead the Lord's people astray? The Lord Himself said, "Whoso shall offend" (that is, "be a snare to") "one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Matt. 18:6. Hymenaeus and Philetus-and how many, alas! since their day! -were a snare to some of the Lord's little ones; and the fact is recorded for the admonition and warning of all who have, or take, the place of teachers in the Church of God.

The Apostle turns from the sad effects of heretical doctrine, and finds consolation in that which is firm and indestructible: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." v. 19. In the form of this pregnant statement there is doubtless, as we have elsewhere shown, an allusion to Zech. 3:9; but in this place it is the meaning of it that must occupy our attention. And this is to be sought, first of all, in the contrast to what the Apostle had just written.

Hymenaeus and Philetus had been instrumental in overturning the foundations of the faith in some of the saints; but, in spite of all that Satan had succeeded in doing by their means, the foundation of God stood, and was immovable. This is no small consolation in a day of confusion and ruin. The enemy may be permitted to wreck the public form of Christianity, and to turn its teachers into advocates of rationalistic or superstitious imaginations; but there still remains for faith this sure foundation of God on which souls may repose, whatever the fury of the storm, in perfect peace. It

is not the question here what the foundation is-though there be but one, namely, Christ-but it is rather the fact that there is a foundation of God, which is absolutely beyond the reach and the power of all Satan's artifices.

The further significance of this statement is discovered in the twofold seal, or inscription, which the foundation bears. (Compare Zech. 3:7; Rev. 22:14.) First, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." Time was when men also knew who were the Lord's (see Acts 5:12-14); and the Apostle himself had often sent letters-as, for example, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse"-assured that his epistle would reach the known company of believers in the place. But now all was changed. All they which were in Asia had turned away from the Apostle; and the profession of Christianity, so widespread, had become so merged in the world and worldly things that it was impossible for the outward eye to distinguish the true saints of God.

As in the days of Israel's apostasy under Ahab, Jehovah alone knew the seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal, so now the Lord alone could with unerring certainty recognize His people amid the mass of professors that had crowded into the Church on earth. It is the same now in Christendom. Nations call themselves Christians, and their "temples" and "churches" are filled with so-called worshipers; but, while we may be certain that in the case of large numbers it is nothing but profession, it is a great consolation to remember that the Lord discerns in every place who are His, that not one real saint is unnoticed by His eye. I "know My sheep, and am known of Mine"; and this still holds true for the comfort of those who have heard His voice. There is, however, more: "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ" (it should be "the Lord") "depart from iniquity." The Lord, on His side, knew, and knows, who are His; and His people, on their side, in the ruin in which they are found, are under the responsibility of departing from iniquity. It belongs to them, if they name the name of the Lord, as being under His authority, to depart from everything, every association, every habit, and practice-which could not be attached to His name.

How different is this teaching from that which is now current, to the effect that in a day of confusion like the present it is impossible to walk in the path of separation from evil! This word of the Apostle's is the answer to all such reasonings, and sets forth, at the same time, the abiding responsibility of every child of God to depart from evil; and we thus learn that any association whatever with iniquity is contrary to the Lord's mind.

Exposition of 2 Timothy

Chapter 2:20-26

The next thing that comes before us is the state into which Christianity, in its outward form in the world, has fallen: "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." vv. 20, 21.

It will be observed that the Apostle does not exactly say that the house of God contains vessels to honor and to dishonor, though this be true when we speak of the house of God as built by man under responsibility, according to its presentation in 1 Corinthians 3. It is a comparison rather that he uses; and hence he says, "in a great house." At the same time, it must not be forgotten that this is what the house of God on earth has become-a sphere in which believers and mere professors,

good and faithful servants and evil servants, have become so mixed that vessels of gold and silver are mingled everywhere with those of wood and earth.

When the house of God was formed on the day of Pentecost, it contained only those who were really believers; for the Lord then added "such as should be saved." But very soon, as Jude writes, certain men crept in unawares; and thenceforward that which called itself Christian was a mixed, corrupt thing.

Such was the state of things which had arisen even in Paul's days, and from which the Spirit of God takes occasion to lay down principles for individual guidance, both at that time and in succeeding days, when the confusion and corruption indicated should become more pronounced. We say "principles for individual guidance"; for it is of moment to remark that, to quote the words of another, "Discipline for individual faults is not the subject here, nor the restoration of souls in an assembly that has in part lost its spirituality, but a line of conduct for the individual Christian in respect of that which, in any way, dishonors the Lord." To apply this language indeed to the separate assemblies of the saints would be to falsify the teaching of the Apostle in other scriptures, and to justify the tolerance of almost any and every kind of evil in the midst of the saints. On this account it cannot be too earnestly insisted that the Apostle is dealing with the external form of Christianity, of which the believer himself forms part; "for he calls himself a Christian, and the great house is all that calls itself Christian." In these circumstances, what the Holy Ghost here affirms is the individual responsibility to be in separation from evil, according to what has been seen in the previous verse - "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ [the Lord] depart from iniquity." In verse 22, we have the nature of this individual responsibility more precisely described.

The Apostle then says, "If a man" (rather "any one") "therefore purge himself from these," etc. The language is very strong; literally it is, "purge out himself from." The word "purge out" is only found in one other place, where it is, "Purge out therefore the old leaven" (1 Cor. 5:7), which was to be done by the Corinthians in putting "away from among yourselves that wicked person." But here - and it is in the contrast the teaching lies - we are to purge ourselves out from the vessels of dishonor. The Corinthians had to put away evil from their midst, because it was sin in the assembly; we have to separate ourselves from evil (because it is instruction for the individual, and not, as in their case, for the assembly), in order to be approved for the Lord's service.

Such then is the Lord's mind for His people in a day of confusion and evil. Two questions, however, remain to be answered. The first is, What are the vessels to dishonor? and, second, Has the Apostle the Lord's servants only in view? To take the latter first, it is abundantly clear, we judge, from the words, "If a man [any man] therefore purge himself," that all Christians are contemplated. If this be so, as we cannot doubt it is, the vessels to dishonor will mean not a class, but those, whether Christians or simply professors, who are defiled with evil of any kind, or engaged in anything that dishonors the Lord's name. And let the reader observe, that the responsibility is not to judge the personal state and condition of such vessels, but to purge himself from them, because he is under the obligation as naming the name of the Lord, to depart from iniquity.

The consequence of separating from such vessels is, that we shall be vessels unto honor (and this will explain the meaning of the vessels of gold and of silver in the preceding verse), sanctified, set

apart, and holy as so set apart, and meet, or serviceable, for the Master's use - prepared unto every good work. This is a solemn word for believers, and never more so than at the present moment. Do any then desire to be used of the Lord? Here is His own qualification for service; and be it remembered that the qualification is within our own reach and attainment, in dependence on Him who reveals it to us, and through the power which He will bestow. Then, when once qualified, it is His to take us up and use us how, where, and when He will; for by it we are "prepared unto every good work."

There is, however, also the positive side of separation; and hence the Apostle adds, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." v. 22. This word is more especially addressed to Timothy, but its significance lies in the connection, following as it does upon the verses just considered. All the temptations that appealed to such as were young, or rather the desires to which the temptations were addressed, were to be shunned; and while, on the one hand, he was to "flee" from these, he was, on the other hand, to "pursue" after the things here indicated. Purpose of heart will be needed both for the one and the other; and nothing will beget this save having the heart occupied with Christ, and thus brought into communion with His mind, and, as a consequence, having the single eye. Righteousness, practical righteousness. comes first - that righteousness which is fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:4), and which is displayed in holiness of life and ways. Then faith - that faith which is a fruit of the Spirit, and which distinguished so many of the saints of old, as recorded in Hebrews 11, and was exhibited in their confidence in God under all circumstances of trial, adversity, and the manifested power of the enemy. Also "charity" - that is, love - which in its essence is the divine nature, and which is described, as it is seen in saints, by the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 13. And finally, peace - peace as between the saints, as a consequence of enjoyed peace with God in the soul, but which can only be pursued where the graces just named are previously found. (Compare Isa. 32:17; Jas. 3:17, 18.)

Note, moreover, that these things are to be "pursued" in company with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It is often contended that separation from evil would, in a day like the present, lead to a path of isolation. This scripture is a complete answer to such a contention; and indeed it is evident that those who recognize their individual responsibility to depart from iniquity, and to follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, must find themselves in the same path, and be drawn together in the same company.

It should also be observed that the believer is expected to distinguish those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, as well as those who are vessels to dishonor, and that it is as much the Lord's mind for him to be in company with the former, as to purge himself out from the latter. The confusion is undoubted, but, wherever there is a single eye, there will be little difficulty in discerning the Lord's path through it; and it is no small consolation to know that there will never be wanting, even in the darker days yet to come, those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, or guidance for those who seek to do the Lord's will, to direct to the place where such are to be found.

Once more the Apostle warns Timothy to beware of controversies: "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing: that they do gender strifes." v. 23; compare v. 16. It is, literally, foolish and "undisciplined" questions; and it has been pointed out by another that the word "undisciplined"

is often used for a "mind not subject to God, a man following his own mind and will." This will explain the kind of questioning referred to - those which spring from man's own thoughts and reasonings, and which therefore could not fail to produce strifes.

The introduction of this last word, "strifes," furnishes the opportunity for a beautiful description of what should be the character and conduct of a true servant. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." vv. 24-26.

The word translated "strive," as that also in the preceding verse rendered "strifes," should be rather "contend," and "contend" in the sense of fighting, coming into conflict in an evil way. While therefore the servant of the Lord must maintain the truth in spite of all opposition, withstand his fellow servant to the face if need be, as Paul did Peter when the truth of grace was in question, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, he must never descend from the platform of the truth, as a positive revelation from God, and as entrusted to him as a witness, to engage in conflict with those who raise foolish and unlearned questions. He, on his part, should come out from the presence of God with the authority of the truth established in his own soul, and thus enabled to proclaim it dogmatically in the midst of all the uncertainties of human contentions, from entering into which he will also carefully guard himself. With a message for all, he ranges himself on the side of none in their conflicts, for he should speak to all alike in the name of the Lord.

Moreover, as to his own spirit, he is to be gentle unto all; undisturbed by the passions which govern men in their party contests; calm, as in the enjoyment of the presence of God; governed in all his thoughts and feelings by that mighty grace of which he has been made the subject, and thus, strengthened through the operation of the Spirit of God, enabled to present the gentleness of Christ to all to whom he is sent, and with whom he may have to deal. He is also to be "apt to teach"; for with questions raised on all sides affecting the Word of God, he should be ever ready to explain and affirm its meaning.

Next, he is to be patient, or rather "forbearing," in the sense of suffering any and everything that may come in the path of service, from the hands of opponents. It still refers to the spirit of the servant, as may be seen from the use of the word in the exhortation, "Forbearing [or bearing with] one another in love" (Eph. 4:2). And hence the Apostle proceeds, "In meekness instructing [or setting right] those that oppose themselves"; that is, who oppose themselves to the truth of God. And to sustain the servant in such a spirit, he is ever to remember the possibility of the recovery of opponents. The enemy of today may, in the grace of God, be the friend of tomorrow; and never losing sight of this, he is to go on meekly instructing, and looking to God to give the opposers repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.

The last clause of this verse (v. 26) has occasioned considerable discussion. The point raised is, whether "his will" is God's will or Satan's. If the former, the meaning is, "that they may recover themselves" (or come to their senses) "out of the snare of the devil" (who are taken captive by him) for His will - that is, for the will of God - the object of their recovery being that they might for

the future be governed by the will of God. If the latter, it must be taken as it stands, and then it means that these opposers are taken captive by Satan to do his will. Whichever view may be adopted, the solemn teaching of the scripture cannot be resisted, that those who oppose the truth are the instruments as being in the snare of Satan, and that as such they have been taken captive by him as his prey.

Such is the revelation here made - that all who resist the truth of God, who refuse it, however eminent they may be in the world of intellect or science, are nothing more than the poor slaves of Satan, led of, if not inspired by, him, even as the servants of the Lord are led and taught by the Spirit of God.

Exposition of 2 Timothy

Chapter 3:1-9

Having dealt with the evils that were already prevalent in his own time, the Apostle passes onward to the eve of the close of the dispensation: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." v. 1. In the first epistle he had spoken of "the latter times" (chap. 4:1); but now he is more precise, and speaks of the end of "the latter times," the closing days of this present interval.

We learn then that perilous (or difficult) times will distinguish the last days. How different is the future of Christianity in this world from the representations of its popular advocates! These love to sketch the gradual conversion of the world by the preaching of the gospel, and the consequent gradual subjection of men and things, human governments and institutions, to an absent Christ and Lord. The inspired revelation here given of the course of Christianity dispels at once this illusion, and convicts its propagators of ignorance of the very scriptures they profess to preach. For what is the truth? In chapter 1, as already seen, all that were in Asia had "turned away" from the Apostle of the Gentiles; in chapter 2 he tells us that the Church had become like a great house, in which were found side by side vessels to honor, and vessels to dishonor; and now he lifts the veil and permits us to see that evil and corruption will increase, and hence that as the end approaches, perilous times, accompanied by the corruption here named, must be expected. The path of Christianity in this world is not therefore like that of the just, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day, but it will be one of increasing gloom and darkness; for "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." It is no small consolation to remember that He who has forewarned us of these things is Himself all-sufficient to sustain, and to enable us to walk in His ways in the midst of surrounding and growing dangers.

We have, in the next place, both the cause and the features of the "perilous times." "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." vv. 2-5. It would scarcely be for edification to enter in these pages upon a minute explanation of all these terms; but the reader himself should solemnly weigh them in the presence of God, as he will then be able to compare them with the moral features of the present day. We cannot, however, forbear to add the following striking remarks of another: "If we compare the list of sins and abominations which Paul gives at the beginning of the epistle to the Romans, as characterizing

heathen life, and the moral degradation of men during those times of darkness and demon-worship, with the catalog of sins that characterize those who have the form of godliness, we shall find that it is nearly the same, and morally quite the same, only that some of the open sins which mark the man who has no outward restraint are wanting here, the form of godliness precluding them and taking their place. It is a solemn thought, that the same degradation which existed among heathens is reproduced under Christianity, covering itself with that name, and even assuming the form of godliness. But in fact it is the same nature, the same passions, the same power of the enemy, with but the addition of hypocrisy.

"From such" Timothy is exhorted to "turn away." If the last days refer to the end of the day of grace, why, it may be inquired, is this direction given to Timothy? The answer is, that these moral features were already beginning to appear; and they will appear with increasing distinctness, while the Lord Jesus tarries, until at last they will culminate in the full blown sins and corruptions here described. When, therefore, the Apostle adds, "from such turn away," he gives a direction which is applicable to every age, and indicates that it is the Lord's mind for His people to be in entire separation from all this moral corruption. Once more, as will be seen, it is the responsibility of the believer to discern the evil, indeed the persons involved in it, and to walk apart from them, whatever their pretensions or forms of godliness.

The means of detection are also supplied. "For," the Apostle proceeds, "of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." vv. 6, 7. Several things should be noticed in this comprehensive description, a description which covers both the seducers and their followers. First, the manner of their procedure is given. They are of the kind "which creep into houses." It is noteworthy that almost all false teaching, or at least that which claims a superior spirituality, begins in secret, and thus forms a school before it is manifested. Some of the saddest heresies that have ever disturbed the Church of God commenced in this way-either by private visits, or by the circulation of "notes" among a chosen sympathizing few. This method carries with it its own condemnation; for whatever will not bear the light cannot be of God, and whatever is given of Him is for the Church. Second, the prey of these false teachers are "silly women, laden with sins." It is in this last phrase that the explanation of the power of these corrupters of the truth lies. The foolish women are a class who, having many sins on their conscience, and thus made to feel them as a burden, would be peculiarly susceptible to any teaching which promised both relief and liberty; for they were not only burdened with their sins, but they were also led away with "divers lusts," or many and various desires. It is what the flesh ever craves-deliverance from past sins, and indulgence for present gratifications; and inasmuch as these "silly women" hoped to obtain both from this new teaching, they became the willing slaves of their evil instructors. Then, last, we read that such- that is, the silly women-were ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. This again is another characteristic of a false system of doctrine. Those who accept it are always deluded by the prospect of a fuller knowledge, for it is ever surrounded by mystery; and thus they are enslaved at the will of their teachers.

But, it may be urged, the corruptions here named are so unblushing that no sincere souls could ever be deceived and entangled. It should therefore be observed that all these abominations are concealed under a form of godliness, and that it is the Spirit of God who, through the Apostle, drags them here out into the light for our warning and guidance. Under such a cloak these men

might outwardly pass, as the Pharisees of old did, for pious and devoted men; for they would be sure to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, while within they might be full of extortion and excess (see Matt. 23:25).

The next two verses give further instruction on the subject. "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith, but they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was." vv. 8, 9. Jannes and Jambres were the magicians of Egypt who withstood Moses and Aaron in the presence of Pharaoh. When Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, as the Lord had commanded, and it became a serpent, the magicians "also did in like manner with their enchantments" (Exod. 7:10, 11). They thus resisted the truth by imitating the action of the Lord's servants; and it is in this way the truth will be, and is being, opposed in the perilous times. It is precisely in this character of opposition that the danger lies for unwary souls. Thus at the present moment all the false systems of men claim that they present all the characteristic truths of Christianity, or that these truths are only expounded in accordance with modern ideas. Satan is too subtle to commence by denying the truth of God; and hence he seeks first of all to insinuate that which seems like the truth, but which, under the expansion of which it is capable, finally ripens into anti-Christian error. This is why the name of Christ is attached, for example, to many soul-destroying systems, and why men, who really ignore every fundamental truth of Christianity, claim to be Christians.

The outward garb then of these resisters of the truth will be Christian in appearance, but the opened eye will detect that it is not the real thing, but an imitation. More than this-for the Holy Ghost exposes their true character-they are men of corrupt minds, and reprobate, tried and found worthless, concerning the faith. Inwardly they were evil men, and, tested by the Christian faith, they were to be rejected.

Great, however, as may be the power of the enemy as thus displayed, there is a limit fixed. It might seem for the moment as if Satan were about to gain, through his servants, a complete victory. But, as we read in the prophet, when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him; so here it is declared that these corrupters "shall proceed no further"; they shall be arrested in their wicked work, and their folly shall be publicly exposed. It was so with Jannes and Jambres. For a long time they withstood Moses; but at length, when God stepped in and created life at the word of Moses, they were baffled, and were constrained to confess that it was "the finger of God." Whatever, therefore, the apparent success of Satan's servants, confidence in God should never be lessened, for the believer may surely count upon Him to vindicate His own truth in His own way and in His own time. This is the consolation of the godly in times of corruption and apostasy; and together with this the assurance may ever be entertained that, though the Church, like Israel, may be sifted by these false teachers, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. The power of the enemy, whatever his malice, is thus only an instrumentality in the hands of God for testing and purifying His people.

Exposition of 2 Timothy

Chapter 3:10-17

The walk of Paul is a close approximation to that of Christ, and it is on this account that he is often led of the Holy Ghost to refer to himself as an example to others. This is the case here. He has been depicting the moral corruptions that will mark the perilous times of the last days; and then, mindful of the difficulties of those who may desire to be faithful to the Lord, as exemplified in Timothy, he exhibits himself as a pattern to all who may be found in these circumstances: "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me." vv. 10, 11.

It is of great importance to observe that "my doctrine," or teaching, comes first. His teaching was the truth committed to his trust; and we thus learn that nothing will preserve the saints in a time of abounding error but the possession of divine truth, and also that a walk according to God-for "manner of life," or conduct, comes next in the list-can only flow out from a knowledge of the truth. (Compare Col. 1:9, 10.) Nothing either edifies or sanctifies but the truth (see John 17:17-19); and it lies therefore at the basis of all steadfastness; and it forms, at the same time, a walk worthy of the Lord. Thereon follows "purpose." He will not say "fidelity," for the Lord alone pronounces judgment upon the faithfulness of His servants; but he says "purpose," because, through grace, it was the one desire of his heart to follow the Lord in all circumstances and at all costs. (See Phil. 3:9-11.)

Besides this, he can mention faith, for confidence in God distinguished this devoted servant in all his trials. It was this alone that sustained him amid the corruption that seemed to be flowing in from every quarter; and it was this alone also that enabled him to be "long-suffering" in the midst of all that was taking place, and even toward the adversaries of the truth; to exhibit divine "love" in the presence of the evil, even though the more he loved the less he was loved; and also to be "patient," to endure as knowing, in spite of all appearances, what would be the final issue of the conflict.

But there was more to be added. Such teaching and such a life, in the face of the enemy's power, could not escape trials and sorrows; and hence the Apostle recalls to Timothy's mind the "persecutions" and "afflictions" which he had undergone in his service at the places with which Timothy was conversant. (Compare Acts 16:1, 2, with Acts 13 and 14.) If, however, he recounts his sufferings in his service and testimony, it is but to magnify the Lord's faithfulness; for he adds, "But out of them all the Lord delivered me." There might have been persecutions; but while, like the psalmist, he had to say, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," he could also unite in his testimony, "But the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19).

The experience of the Apostle was to be no uncommon one; for he says, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." v. 12. It will be perceived that it is not said that all Christians, nor that all who live godly, but it is all that will live godly in Christ Jesus who must be persecuted. Stress is to be laid upon the word "will," for it means that there is a real desire, purpose of heart, even, to live in this manner; and also upon "in Christ Jesus," because it shows that it is the life in which Christ Himself is both magnified and displayed. Those then whose hearts are set, through divine grace, to follow Christ fully, like Caleb of old, to own no authority but His over the heart and conscience, to have no guide but Himself and His Word, and thus to be apart from all that dishonors His name, cannot, in the difficult times of which the Apostle speaks, escape persecutions. If any who call themselves Christians do avoid the hostility of the world or the enmity

of Satan they can only do so at the expense of faithfulness to Christ. May this truly sink deeply into our hearts!

In contrast with those who will live in godly in Christ Jesus, and as giving force to what he has just said, as well as to cast Timothy more completely upon the divine safeguards for such a perilous path, the Apostle says, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." v. 13. These evil men and seducers, it should be well noted, are not men of the world, but those who are inside the professing church, claiming to be Christians, having a form of godliness if they deny the power thereof. This fact once more shows that there is no hope for Christianity, in its public form, in this world-that there is no prospect of its recovery or purification -but that, on the other hand, it will go from bad to worse until, as we learn elsewhere, assuming its final phase of Laodicea, it will be spewed out of the Lord's mouth as 'a, nauseous and abhorrent thing.

The power of the enemy is seen in the fact that, while these evil men will deceive, they will themselves be deceived, a foreshadowing of those in the future, after the Church is caught away to be with the Lord, on whom God will send "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." What an immense comfort to remember, while gazing on such a picture, that the Lord will deliver all His faithful ones out of all the afflictions and persecutions which they may have to suffer!

In the next place, Paul points Timothy to the source of all guidance and strength for his own path, and he thereby teaches how believers in all ages may be fortified and preserved, both from evil and from the power of the enemy, in a difficult day. "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." vv. 14, 15.

This significant instruction demands the most careful attention. It will at once be observed that the apostolic communications are put on a level with the written Word, the Old Testament scriptures, with which Timothy had been acquainted from a child. (See chapter 1:5.) These communications have since been committed to writing, and are now found in the epistles of the New Testament; but at that time they were conveyed to the Church through inspired men, such as the Apostle Paul. And it is of the utmost moment to observe that Paul claims for them divine authority, and can thus exhort his child in the faith to continue in the things he had learned and believed, knowing, as he did, from whom he had learned them; that is, in his case, from the Apostle.

And Timothy's safety amid surrounding corruptions was to be found in continuing in what he had already received. As another has said, "Security rests upon the certainty of the immediate origin of the doctrine which he had received; and upon the Scriptures, received as authentic and inspired documents, which announced the will, the acts, the counsels, and even the nature of God. We abide in that which we have learned, because we know from whom we learned it. The principle is simple and very important. We advance in divine knowledge; but, so far as we are taught of God, we never give up for new opinions that Which we have learned from an immediately divine source, knowing that it is so."

The Apostle indeed guards Timothy, and all, from two common and pressing dangers: first, from the snare of resting our confidence, of having the foundation of our faith, in anything short of the

divine Word; and, second, from being decoyed from off this foundation by pretended developments, or by the progress of modern thought. We are to abide in that which we have received from the Word of God, and thus to refuse to be carried about with divers and strange doctrines; and for this reason we are to accept nothing short of God's own Word -no human opinions, however venerated, or however commended by the sanctity of their authors- as the basis of our beliefs. The Apostle John in like manner writes to the babes of the family of God: "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning" (1 John 2:24). And there never was a day when this lesson was more needed. Confronted as we are on the one side by a boastful and superstitious religion which grounds its claims, traditions, and practices upon the writings of men, and on the other by a daring infidelity which appeals from the Scriptures to human reasonings, we learn that our only safety lies in cleaving to the sure and infallible Word; and that, resting in it, we shall be impregnable against the attacks both of the one and the other. To continue therefore in what we have learned from the Scriptures is our blessed resource in the perilous times in which our lot is cast.

Coming to details, it will be perceived that the Apostle refers Timothy to two things - the means of preservation from the attacks of the enemy; namely, by continuing in the things he had been certified of by the Apostle; and, second, the certainty and the consequent enjoyment of salvation through the written Word, and faith which is in Christ Jesus. We are always most courageous in the presence of difficulties or enemies when in the personal enjoyment of salvation, and on this account the two things are here combined. (Compare John 20:21; Eph. 6:17.)

The introduction of the Word of God leads the Apostle to state the character and uses of all Scripture. He says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (or, "every good work"). vv. 16, 17. All or every scripture is then divinely inspired, given by the operation of the Holy Ghost through human vessels as a revelation of the divine mind (see 2 Peter 1:21), and the Apostle in another place claims this inspiration for the words in which he delivered his message: "Which things also we speak," he says, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which [in those which] the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1 Cor. 2:13). It is not only therefore that the Scriptures contain, but they also are the truth; and they are thus absolutely infallible and, as such, have attached to them God's authority because they are the expression of His own mind. They are therefore to be received, unquestioningly received, as the voice of the living God to our souls; and thus the only proper attitude to be taken up when they are read is that of Samuel, who said, "Speak, for thy servant heareth."

The uses of the Scriptures are next given. First and foremost they are "profitable" for teaching, being, as we have seen, the revelation of God's mind for His people; also for "reproof," or conviction, for, inasmuch as they are the divine standard, the character of our conduct or actions is at once discerned by their application; for "correction," since they not only convict of sin and failure, but they also point out the right path for God's people; for "instruction in righteousness," because they contain precepts and exhortations applicable to all the relationships and responsibilities, whether toward God, one another, or toward men in general, in which the believer can possibly be found. The Word of God is thus the only, and the all-sufficient, source of instruction for His people.

Finally, the object of a true knowledge of the Scriptures is added; it is "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Attention to the extra force of the words "perfect" and "thoroughly furnished" will guide us into the Apostle's meaning. The former-found only in this place-might be rendered "complete," "suitable," or "exactly fitted"; the latter, used only twice, might be given as "fully equipped."

In chapter 2, as we have seen, it is said that if a man shall purge himself out from among the vessels to dishonor, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, "prepared unto all good works." If now these two passages are combined, their teaching will be the more clearly seen. The preparation unto every good work then, in chapter 2, refers rather to the requisite personal state for service; while that in the scripture before us points out that divine knowledge, and divine knowledge gleaned from the Scriptures is also necessary to make the man of God suitable for service, to furnish or equip him for every good work.

In chapter 2 we learn that the vessel must be sanctified, and in chapter 3 that, so far from being empty, it must be filled with the knowledge of the Word of God, if it would be in a condition to be used in the Master's service. If therefore the man of God would be "complete," he must resort to the Scriptures, and, as Timothy was exhorted in the first epistle, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all"; for the only weapon that can be used in service and conflict is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Exposition of 2 Timothy

Chapter 4:1-8

There is a manifest connection between this section and the close of the preceding chapter. The Apostle had shown how the man of God might be thoroughly furnished, or entirely equipped, for every good work; and he thereon founds an appeal to Timothy to be diligent in his service. He says, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." vv. 1, 2.

These are solemn and weighty words, and need to be devoutly weighed in the divine presence, and especially by the Lord's servants; for they set Timothy, and with him the laborer in every age, in full view of his responsibility, while, at the same time, they remind him of the tribunal before which the character of all service will be ultimately tested. It is, in fact, a searching appeal to the conscience; for "the appearing of Christ is always in connection with responsibility; His coming is with the object of calling us to Himself in connection with our privileges. Here it is the first of these two cases; not the assembly, or the Father's house, but God, the appearing, and the kingdom. All that is in relation to responsibility, government, judgment, is gathered together in one point of view.

Coming to details it may be observed that Timothy is charged, first, "before God," the Apostle thereby calling forth a present exercise of conscience (compare 1 Thess. 1:3), as he teaches him that all his service is carried on under God's eye. Next, it is, "and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead." As he writes in another place, "We labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of [acceptable to] Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:9, 10). All judgment has been committed to His hands, and although no believer will ever be judged for sins, the character of his works and service will be manifested and

declared before the tribunal of Christ. To have this before the soul is therefore, on the one hand, a blessed encouragement, and on the other hand, an energetic motive to fidelity. The servant who really waits for his Lord cannot but keep his loins girded and his light burning.

Having supplied Timothy with such an assemblage of motives for perseverance and fidelity, the Apostle indicates the character of his work. He sums it up at the outset in one pregnant exhortation: "Preach the word." This was his one responsibility, whatever the state of things around. Indifference, decay, and corruption were increasing, and would increase; but instead of being disheartened and using this as a reason for inactivity, Timothy was all the more, on this account, to proclaim the Word. He was, as God's watchman, to keep the trumpet of testimony to his lips, and to give forth no uncertain sound, whether men would or would not hear. He was not responsible for the effect of the testimony; he was not to be influenced by signs of blessing or the absence of it. His sole concern was to be faithful, and in order to this he must continue to proclaim the message entrusted to his stewardship.

The urgency of the need is shown by the next clause: "Be instant in season, out of season." All times were to be alike to Timothy; his work must never be intermitted; he must be ever on the watch for an opportunity to fulfill his vocation. To one who had a "burden of the LORD" resting on his soul, no time would be unseasonable; but, like Jeremiah, he would find that the Word was in his heart as a burning fire, and he would be weary with forbearing, and he would not be able to stay (Jer. 23:38; 20:9). He was thus bidden by the Apostle to be "instant" (urgent) in season and out of season.

We come next to the special forms of his ministry. Proclaiming the Word in general, but to convict, rebuke, etc., is more specific, pointing out the various needs of souls, especially at such a moment. "Convict" is the same word as "rebuke" in 1 Tim. 5:20, and signifies to convict of sin by demonstration to the conscience. "Rebuke" has here its proper force, as may be seen from its use, for example, in Mark 8:33, where the Lord rebuked Peter. It is a word therefore that would seem to contemplate opponents to the truth, false or Jewish teachers, unless indeed open backsliders be in view, such as were turning grace into licentiousness.

Last, he was to "exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine," or teaching. "Exhort" is a large word, as is shown by its being translated sometimes "comfort," and sometimes "encourage." Here, however, "exhort," as we judge, expresses more nearly the Apostle's idea; for he adds, "with all longsuffering and doctrine" (teaching). There would therefore be much to encounter in apathy, if not in active opposition, in the service of exhortation; but Timothy was to continue in it in spite of all, and to maintain in this path a meek and unruffled spirit-only to be done in the presence of God, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The reason given for unwearied assiduity in his work is most striking: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." vv. 3, 4. It was not therefore in the prospect of large results that Timothy was to proclaim the Word so earnestly and zealously; but he was to use the present moment as knowing that the opportunity was brief for such a ministry, that teachers would speedily arise who would adapt themselves to the desires of the natural heart, men who would please the fancy and flatter the imagination of their hearers, under the pretext too of having discovered new and striking

things in the Scriptures.

It should be observed, however, that this species of corruption commences with the hearers. It is they who "will not endure sound doctrine" (teaching), and who "after their own lusts... heap to themselves teachers" to satisfy a diseased and itching ear. This class can be traced all down the path of church history, and the reader will have no difficulty in identifying it at the present moment. Plain scriptural teaching that teaching which merely explains and applies the mind of God as contained in the Scriptures-does not suffice for such hearers, nor the teachers whom the Lord sends, as they prefer to "heap" up, to choose, their own; and, when listening, their heart and conscience are never exposed to the action of that Word which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, for they only bring with them "itching ears." The issue could but be one; they turn away from the truth, and they turn to fables; for these alone could minister to their unhealthy appetites.

In contrast with all this, the Apostle, turning again to Timothy, exhorts him: "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy 'ministry.'" v. 5. To watch is, in this place, rather to be sober-"that sober clearness of mind resulting from exemption from false influences," and which can only be acquired and maintained by walking before God and in communion with His mind. To endure afflictions points to the character of the path of the servant in an evil day (see chap. 1:7). He was moreover to do the work of an evangelist. He is thus directed to preach the gospel as well as teach and preach the Word. Apart from the apostles, and cases like Timothy and Titus, the gift of an evangelist would never seem to have been combined with that of a teacher. The only two combined, as may be learned from the fact that one article is prefixed to the two nouns, are pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11). Then summing up all together, Timothy is to make full proof of his ministry, or his service, and in the way here shown; that is, by his whole life being devoted in the energy of the Spirit to the work to which he had been called.

Another motive is supplied as an incentive to Timothy's zeal--the prospect of the Apostle's speedy departure. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." vv. 6-8. The absence therefore of apostolic ministry, so serious a fact with regard to the assembly's position, makes the duty of the man of God the more urgent.

"As Paul's absence was a motive for working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, so is it also a motive for him who is engaged in the work of the gospel to devote himself more than ever to his ministry, in order to supply as far as possible the lack of apostolic service by earnest care for souls, and by instructing them in the truth that he has learned." For with the apostles passing off the scene, apostolic authority and, it may be added, apostolic inspiration ceased. The Word of God, then completed (see Col. 1:25, reading "complete" instead of "fulfill"), remained; and it abides for the consolation and guidance of the saints; and as it was Timothy's, so it is every true servant's, responsibility to "preach the word," and that alone, for the instruction and edification of the Church. We are commended to God and to the word of His grace (Acts 20:32).

The Apostle, in the expectation of his departure, reviews his course and, as led by the Holy Ghost, he is able to affirm his fidelity. Precious grace of God to His devoted servant, to permit him to write

such words with the unerring pen of inspiration! The fight he had fought, or the conflict he had waged, he knew was a good one. It should be noted that he only speaks of the character of the conflict, and not of the manner in which he had carried it on. His course was now ended, and he had kept the faith. Many had departed from it; but he by grace had kept it, maintained the truth, and had indeed transmitted it exactly as he had received it.

He turns, in the next place, to the future, to the prospect that awaited him; and he tells us that there was for him a crown of righteousness. "The crown of righteousness, that is to say, the one bestowed by the righteous Judge, who acknowledged his (Paul's) faithfulness, was laid up and kept for him. It was not till the day of retribution that he would receive it. We see plainly that it is reward for labor and for faithfulness that is here meant. This, or its opposite, characterizes the whole epistle, and not the privileges of grace. The work of the Spirit through us is rewarded by the crown of righteousness, and every one will have a reward according to his labors."

What a motive, then, is here furnished to devotedness! The Lord gives power for His service, and then "at that day" He will award the recompense, even for a cup of cold water which has been given in His name. The reader will remember that the appearing is always the goal for the servant, and the expression "that day" is here connected with the same period.

Exposition of 2 Timothy

Chapter 4:9-22

In this closing section of the epistle, there are several interesting personal references, besides an allusion to the Apostle's appearance before the authorities, not elsewhere recorded. First, however, Paul desires to have Timothy with him: "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me." v. 9. He longed for the presence of his child in the faith, one to whom he could freely unbosom his mind and thoughts, now that there were but few to attach themselves to the Lord's prisoner. Indeed, he would seem to have been alone, with the exception of Luke (v. 11). Timothy was thus not to delay, but to come before the storms of winter made traveling difficult, if not impossible.

Besides, the Apostle had just been passing through trial; "for," he adds, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world [age], and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia." v. 10. The two latter, Crescens and Titus, had gone; but they had not, like Demas, forsaken Paul. They had undoubtedly gone on the Lord's service; but Demas had become cold, yielding to the influences of the age; and, caring no longer to be a "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel," or to be identified with God's vessel of testimony, now a poor despised prisoner, he had, under some pretext or other, abandoned the Apostle and departed to Thessalonica. He loved this present age. What an epitaph! For he now passes out of Scripture history, and is no more seen. Once Paul had mentioned him conjointly with others as a fellow laborer; again, he sends a salutation in his name, in conjunction with "Luke, the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14); and now he has abandoned the testimony. This is not to say that he was not a Christian; but he was one who not only could not endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, but one also whose heart had been decoyed by the world. Alas! how many Demases the Church has seen since that day!

Then, after stating that Luke only remained with him, Paul gives a direction which contains in it a very precious instance of restoring grace: "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." v. 11. It will be remembered that Mark had once departed from Paul and

Barnabas, from Pamphylia, "and went not with them to the work," on which account Paul did not think it good to take him with them on a subsequent journey (Acts 15:37, 38). After an interval the Apostle wrote that Mark was to be received, that he was now serviceable for ministry. See Col. 4:10. Mark, once unfaithful, was thus restored. Grace wrought, and it is interesting to trace the stages of his restoration. Like Demas, he is mentioned three times; but what a difference! Mark is recovered, and the Spirit of God records it; Demas becomes a backslider, unfaithful to the testimony, and disappears as such from our view.

The next notice relates to a laborer in whom Paul had nothing but cause for gratitude: "And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus." v. 12. Writing to the saints at Ephesus, he describes Tychicus as "a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" (see also Col. 4:7) - no mean verdict, especially when we remember that it is one inspired by the Holy Ghost. And it was a singular mercy to the aged Apostle to have, at this moment, such a servant to send on his behalf to Ephesus.

The following verse contains a commission for Timothy, concerning a cloak that the Apostle had left at Troas, and books and parchments. In captivity these might be useful, and Timothy was to bring them with him. The Apostle then refers to "Alexander the coppersmith," whether the same mentioned in Acts 19:33 cannot now be ascertained. He is here stamped with the unenviable notoriety of having been an uncompromising opponent of the truth, and in particular of the Apostle. He "did me much evil," Paul writes; and he adds, "The Lord reward ["will reward" is the more accurate reading] him according to his works" (v. 14). He thus left him in the hands of his Lord, who one day will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart, when everyone will receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10). But he takes the occasion also to warn Timothy of the true character of this adversary; "for," he says, "he hath, greatly withstood our words" (v. 15). A successful disputant he may have been, and thereby he might have secured the applause of his hearers; but he was a tool of Satan to his own destruction, unless indeed he afterward repented.

We come now to the account of the Apostle's appearance before his earthly judge or judges. "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work; and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." vv. 16-18. The reference is undoubtedly to the trial of Paul and, as we should say, to his first hearing (for it is more accurately rendered, "my first defense"); and we learn that not one was found to accompany him to the court. All men "forsook" him, and the word "forsook" is the same as is used of Demas, showing that these, as well as he, had yielded to the power of the enemy. But if they were wrought upon by their fears, grace was still operative in the heart of Paul, and, raising him above the sense of their unfaithfulness and his own desertion, enabled him to pray that the sin might not be laid to their charge.

How closely had Paul to follow in the steps of his Master! And how manifestly was he led by the same Spirit, whatever the difference in the degree of power! We thus read that, when the Lord suffered Himself to be apprehended, "all the disciples forsook Him, and fled" (Matt. 26:56); and

that before His death He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Blessed correspondence! But how few are prepared for the sufferings of such a privilege!

If, however, he was forsaken of man, yet not of the Lord. And may we not say that it is precisely when any in the Lord's service, and for His name, have to experience the solitariness of the path of a faithful witness, that the Lord comes and manifests Himself in a special way? And thus, at this moment of trial, the Lord stood by Paul and strengthened him-strengthened him inwardly (compare Phil. 4:13) -so that the effort of the enemy might be turned into an occasion for the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles that filled the court of trial.

The enemy had sought to silence this devoted witness by stirring up the public authorities against him to secure his condemnation; but the Lord came in, and used the opportunity for a testimony through Paul to Satan's instruments and slaves. In this way the machinations of the foe were exposed and defeated. The Apostle tells us, moreover, that he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. Satan, indeed, had now opened his mouth as a roaring lion against Paul; and if Paul had been unfaithful, Satan would have gained a victory. But the Lord preserved His servant, and he was delivered.

This deliverance vouchsafed to the Apostle becomes the pledge to him of continual deliverance from every evil work (compare 2 Cor. 1:9, 10), as well as the guarantee that the Lord would preserve him unto His heavenly kingdom; that is, until he departed to be with Christ (for the time of his departure was at hand) in heaven, ere the Lord should return for His saints, and before therefore He should appear with His saints to establish His kingdom on the earth. This will explain the term "heavenly kingdom." The thought of all the blessedness thus in prospect fills the heart of the Apostle with praise; and he breaks forth with the ascription, "To whom be glory forever and ever" (unto the ages of the ages). "Amen" (v. 18).

Having told of his deliverance to the Lord's praise, he concludes the epistle with a few more personal references- "Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus." r. 19. It will be remembered that the Apostle "abode with them, and wrought: (for by their occupation they were tentmakers)" (Acts 18:2, 3). And he terms them elsewhere, "my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down" (or hazarded) "their own necks: unto whom not only I give hanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." Rom. 6:3, 4.

Onesiphorus has already been mentioned in this epistle chap. 1:16-18). After introducing the name of Erastus (see Acts 19:22; Rom. 16:23, but whether the same person is not crown), he says, "Trophimus have I left at Miletum, sick" v. 20). "We learn here," says another, "that the miraculous power granted to the apostles was exercised in the Lord's service, and not for their private interests, nor as their personal affection might suggest." This should be borne in mind a day when "faith-healing" is being so urgently pressed ignorance of dispensational truth, as well as of the teaching of the scripture concerning the object of miraculous gifts. Timothy is again exhorted to come, and to use diligence come, to the Apostle before winter. The salutations of the other saints-Eubulus, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren-are added.

The epistle then concludes with the beautiful benediction, `The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you." v. 22. What higher blessing could the Apostle desire or his beloved Timothy? The presence of Him who is the Lord Jesus Christ, all that He is as expressed in these names, to

be with Timothy's spirit, and also grace. May this same blessing be the portion of the beloved reader!

Acts 20:28-31

Led of the Spirit of God to hold up his own example for their imitation, Paul proceeded to found thereon an appeal to themselves; and let everyone who holds any position of responsibility among the saints of God ponder well and prayerfully its terms. "Take heed therefore" - to be diligent in your work? No, but "unto yourselves." As he afterward wrote to Timothy, it is, first of all, "Take heed unto thyself." This is the primary responsibility, the neglect of which has rendered so many servants powerless, and has caused so many shipwrecks (1 Tim. 1:19).

Having taken heed to themselves, they were then to care for all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost, not man, had made them overseers (bishops), and to feed the Church of God so dear to Him, in that He had purchased it with the blood of His own. The Apostle thus supplied these elders with the most powerful motives to diligence and fidelity in their service, motives which sprang from the origin of their office. from the fact that the Church belonged to God. and that He had acquired it at no less a cost than that of the precious blood of His own beloved Son. He helped them in this way to understand also that the magnitude of their responsibility was but the measure of their unspeakable privilege.

This solemn charge was evidently given in view of the following warning, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." vv. 29, 30.

Two sources of danger were thus indicated from without and from within. Wolves from without would seek to harass and scatter the sheep (see John 10:12); and professors within, departing from the truth and teaching error, would form "schools of opinion," sects and parties, and thus divide the flock. Sad prospect! But how fully, alas! it has been realized, for the state of the professing church at the present moment entirely answers to this description. What then were these elders to do in view of the evil days? They were to copy Paul's example, and just as he had, during three years, "ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears," so they were to labor with all earnestness to tread in his steps. Such a ministry might not indeed be acceptable; for the people of God, like Israel of old, prefer those who prophesy "smooth things"; but the path of the true servant must be governed alone by fidelity to his Lord, whose approbation must suffice for his encouragement.

Address to Young Christians

Psalm 73

In the 73rd Psalm we have a Jewish scene. The nation of Israel is before us, and the remnant in that nation are speaking and telling out the experiences of their hearts.

We find much in it, however, that is parallel to what the Christian passes through experimentally as he goes on in this wilderness and finds himself rejected by the world. I am sure that many of us have read this Psalm a good many times as expressing the distress we find in our hearts at different times. It is the plaint of the suffering saint as he views the prosperity of the ungodly around him.

Does God really take knowledge of what is going on? Does He really understand what I am passing through, and, if He does, why does He remain so painfully silent and let me suffer thus? The problem of the suffering of God's faithful people, and at the same time prosperity of those that are lifted up with pride, is most vividly portrayed in this Psalm.

This is intended to be an address to young people. I do not know how far, with your enthusiasm of youth, you may have gone in like experiences, but I do know this definitely, you have not much farther to go on in your life before you are going to get a taste of it. If the Lord leaves you here, you will need soon to be prepared for it.

"But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped." O child of God, has not that been your experience at times? Yes, this suffering remnant here tell how they tried out of an honest heart to please God. They tried to go on in honesty and integrity; they remind God that they have sought to maintain a heart free from offense; they would not allow evil in their lives; they were making God their hope and refuge.

The psalmist then writes, I looked around and saw the wicked getting on fine; but what about himself? Oh, "almost gone... well-nigh slipped." You know it is better to "well-nigh" slip than to really slip, and I suppose all have done both. We are just on the edge, and then God in His wondrous grace and goodness slips that arm around us and recovers us; and that is a blessed experience. You may be sure if He does allow us to slip, it is because He sees self-confidence there that needs a fall. It would not be His first choice.

I believe that God has a first and a second way for every one of us. His first is the happy choice, but then if we refuse the first, God in His wisdom and in His faithfulness has a second far us; and that is for our good too, but not in the same sense as the first one. The first would have spared us suffering and humiliation, but the second is in order that we may be spared further sorrow, shame, and trouble; and so in faithfulness God gives it to us mingled with His discipline.

This man saw the prosperity of the wicked. "For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm." What a picture of the ungodly! Often times the most ungodly, those who have no place for God in their thoughts, seem to thrive; and they get along splendidly. They have good

positions; perhaps they are the heads of large business enterprises, and their names are constantly appearing in the headlines of the news. They are influential men of the world; yet, "There is no fear of God before their eyes"! Rom. 3:18. God does not enter into their thoughts; they are living godless lives. They live in beautiful homes, drive fine cars, and have all the pleasures their hearts desire; everything seems to go on lovely.

On the other hand, there is a poor, faithful, saint of God who is doing the very best he can to make his way. He has a wife and family, and has tried out of an honest heart to provide for them. He wants to "Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17). He knows that Scripture says, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"; and he knows that "If any provide not for his own," he "is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8). But he finds himself out of a position; he has no work; the rent is due, and the children are hungry; sometimes they want for the necessary clothing to keep them warm. Satan now comes and forces home the contrast: What is God doing for you? Nothing but trouble; what are you getting, what has it brought you? What are you realizing? Satan knows how to hammer that home to the soul as with a hot iron. Satan knows how to take advantage of all this.

Have you had any experience like that? Do you know what it is to have wranglings in your soul, to have compared your life with those who are not Christians at all, or worldly minded Christians who do not seem much interested in the things of God? That is what the man who wrote this Psalm knew about.

Let us read further. "They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth."

What tremendous thoughts! What great talk! What a high place they take! They are not even satisfied to discuss matters of earth, but they invade the heavens. They discuss things beyond them, spewing out their thoughts of infidelity. What boasting, what vanity! Was there ever an age when this spirit was more manifested than it is today? They are not ashamed to publish things that once would have caused men to have a care as to what they put in print, as to that under which they sign their name. Now they do it boldly and spew out their infidel thoughts. Pick up any of the current magazines, those we usually call the better class, and I dare say you will hardly find a one but what has some of these infidel articles. They glibly discuss God; the origin of all things; creation; speak of the progress and history of man, millions of years backward or forward. "Great swelling words." "They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth."

What about God? What about God's people? "Therefore His people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How Both God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches."

There are the two things- the prosperity of the ungodly in the world, and the trial of the godly saint. Does God know? Has God forgotten? That is the question that has been raised thousands of times in the experience of God's people in this world. Does God really know the trial I am 'passing through; and if He does, why does He remain silent? From outward experience, it looks as though a premium were put on ungodliness and vanity, for the ungodly seem to get along better than the one who lets God into his life.

"Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the daylong have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." The experiences are too painful for words. One stands aghast at the experiences that some of the saints have to pass through in this world. It makes one gasp.

I have been impressed with the fact that many saints are unusually tried at the present time, and I wonder if it is an effort of the Spirit of God to loosen our hold on things down here, so that there will be a longing for His coming? The Lord's people are a tried people at the present time. The testings are various, but a tested people they are. You can go into hardly a home of the people of God today, and get into the inner life of their home, but what you will find burdened hearts. You will find hearts that are weighed down with care. That tells us that the people of God are a tried people now.

"For all the daylong have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." Now a little light begins to break in on the problem. "If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of Thy children." In other words, that is a very poor way for believers to talk.

"When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." There is the place to get the answer to those unbelieving questions that raise themselves in our hearts. There is a place to get the answer; it is in the sanctuary of God, getting into God's presence. The one who is speaking here went into God's presence about this thing; and then he says, "Then understood I their end." Then I began to understand. It may not be always that we get the full explanation, but it sets our poor reasoning hearts at rest, and they are at rest in silence.

The psalmist in the 119th Psalm, in connection with his pathway of affliction, uttered these beautiful words: "Thou art good, and doest good." That was a wonderful thing to be able to say. It was in connection with affliction too. The heart in submission bows and says, "Thou art good, and doest good."

Dear young Christian, that is real fruit - something that is precious in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is fruit - "Herein is My Father glorified," etc. When a soul bows in affliction and trial, and justifies God and says, "Thou art good," it is a wonderful thing. The natural heart will not do that. The natural heart says, Why? If God is good, Why? Faith says, "Thou art good, and doest good," and that is very precious to the heart of Christ; and it is a blessed experience for your soul and mine, if we reach that place through grace where we can actually say that.

He went into the sanctuary and got light on the end of these folks. "Then understood I their end." You and I will never spend five seconds envying the ungodly if we just get one awful view five seconds long of what their end is-of what awaits them. God sometimes lifts the veil at the end, and lets people see what is coming to them in the next world.

The writer goes on to say, "Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction." Is not that true? How many are suddenly cut off! Remember, the very next step that they take, they may be in eternity. So many are suddenly stricken in these days- meet with violent deaths - how quick it is!

"How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors." All suddenly coming to an end! What must fill his mind? How different from one who knows Christ- a child of God who faces this life and the next with a calm confidence, knowing the Lord has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." We do not need to envy those that prosper, and wish we had their possessions. Just slip into God's presence. Let us get His viewpoint in the situation, and then there will not be any envy, but a deep sense of thankfulness in our souls that we are not numbered among them. We have something infinitely better.

"As a dream when one awaketh; so O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before Thee."

This is repentance on the part of the child of God for these reasonings in which he had been indulging. When we make an acknowledgment to God of our failures, it is a good thing to make a completely clean-breasted acknowledgment. When I was indulging in those thoughts, I was foolish, etc. He was tried, and reasoned it out from just what one sees, not taking God into account in His way - perfection, love, goodness, etc.

"Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand." Yes, dear child of God, that is the One you have, the Lord. Do not worry about the prosperity of the ungodly; you have THE LORD. What intimacy, love, consideration, confidence that comes to you, and the preciousness of the Lord right by your side! That is the only way to be happy in this world - companionship with Christ - and you can have that. But let me tell you, if you want to enter upon a certain pathway of sorrow, just attempt to get your enjoyment the way the ungodly are getting it; and I promise you, you will have a full cup of bitterness before the end comes. You have heard too much truth, have had too much blessed ministry, you know too much of the way, to ever find your portion of happiness in the pathway of the ungodly in this world. True joy and happiness are found in companionship with Christ.

"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." Dear fellow-Christian, do you not feel that you need the dependable, guiding counsel of the Lord for your soul? What a day in which to live, with pitfalls on every side! If you are going to escape, the only place to get the needed wisdom is in the Word of God. It gives dependable counsel for your soul. If you want to be happy and to be guided through this scene, saved from many a heartache, heed the Word of God. If you despise it, you will have to reap sorrow.

Everything you need to guide you through this world in a moral and spiritual way, blessed, dependable counsel to your soul, is found in the Word of God. The way to be happy is to walk with God; the way to be miserable is to attempt to find your happiness in the world.

"Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Dear young soul, if that is the language of your heart, I will tell you, you are on the road to happiness. Yes, you are happy, for that is happiness. "WHOM H AVE I?" Do you want something beside Christ? Do you want something more than Christ? - something that Christ has not given you? If you are satisfied with what He gives you, you are not only satisfied, but you will learn the secret of happiness. If we could only realize it, God wants us to be happy, and intends us to be; but the only way to be happy is in the pathway of obedience. Every time we step aside from that pathway,

lured by something else, we are courting unhappiness through sorrow; and sooner or later we will reap what we sow.

"My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from Thee shall perish: Thou halt destroyed all them that go a whoring from Thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Thy works."

Take the pathway of obedience then. Before you can do that consistently, there must be the appreciation in your own soul of the mighty fact that God is for you, and intends only happiness for your soul. Learn to justify God in every circumstance, and calm peace will be yours.

Animal Sacrifice: the Institution of Animal Sacrifice

The institution of sacrifice is not shrouded in mystery. It is true that there is only one book which furnishes us with authentic information about it, and there is only one historian who has given us any account of what took place on that occasion. That Book is the Bible - God's inspired Word; and the historian is Moses, a prophet mighty in words and deeds (Acts 7:22). No eyewitness then, as men would speak of one, has transmitted any record of it; yet it is from one who was present that we learn anything about it. He to whom acceptable sacrifice was that day offered has caused the history of it to be related, and has furnished us in His grace with the suited instruction which flows from it.

As long then as the Bible remains extant upon earth, so long will that history be preserved among men. Forever and ever we know will the remembrance of that sacrifice abide before God. It was late, however, in the world's history, and toward the close of that period during which a written revelation was being provided, that the full teaching about Abel's offering was set forth in God's Book. The Lord caused Moses to write the history as a bystander might have narrated it. God, by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, has placed on record the secret history connected with it, but only when that secret history could be made available for the instruction of mankind. For Israel under the law, the history of Abel's sacrifice would be instructive; for saints who are called to walk by faith, the principle upon which righteous Abel acted, it is of all importance for them to know.

Before the fall, and until after the flood, animal food was not given to man. The life of the animal was not therefore to be taken to nourish man's bodily frame. Whence then came the thought of animal sacrifice? Adam and Eve, in the garden just after the fall, learning that they were naked, sewed fig leaves together to make themselves aprons, or girdles - a vain attempt at covering their nakedness, as they quickly discovered, for the girdle of fig leaves was found to be insufficient the moment that they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Naked they both were, that was too true; but the attempt to cover their nakedness with the fig leaves was an admitted failure. The attempt, however, proved two things: first, that they had no idea of procuring a covering by killing any animal; and second, that man's own thought of that which is sufficient to cover his nakedness falls short of what is needed, as well as of God's gracious provision on his behalf. The guilty pair formed girdles of fig leaves; the Lord God made coats of skin, and clothed them. A coat is more than a girdle, and it clothed them; but the coats were of skin. The life of an animal which was not needed for their bodily sustenance had to be taken that the nakedness of the transgressors should be covered; but this thought was wholly of God.

Again, when Cain and Abel approached the Lord with an offering, they each came with a present or gift (minghah) as an acknowledgment of whose creatures they were, but without, it would seem, the offering being called forth by anything wrong that they had done. Cain, we believe from the order of the narrative, approached first, and brought of the fruit of the ground. Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock and their fat. Each brought an offering unto the Lord of that which they

had. Wherein then consisted the difference between the sacrifices of the brothers? What made the one acceptable and the other not? The epistle to the Hebrews tells us, as it recounts, that "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." It was not then from mere intuition on his part, nor from convenience either, that his selection of a sacrifice proceeded. He offered of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat, by faith, understanding in some way unrevealed to us, that such would be acceptable to God. For sinful creatures can only approach a holy God on the ground of the death of the sacrifice.

From that day this truth has never been allowed to die out. But such a truth was foreign to man's thoughts till God disclosed it; for just as Adam and Eve resorted to the fig leaves, so Cain sought to approach God with the fruits of the ground. Adam and Eve learned the inutility of the girdles; Cain was taught the impossibility of one born in sin approaching God with acceptance through offerings of the fruits of the ground. The voice of the Lord God made Adam and Eve conscious of their mistake. The Lord, looking on Abel's sacrifice with acceptance, demonstrated to Cain the insufficiency of the ground on which he was attempting to stand before God. Cain might have said that he had done his best, and that his fruit had cost him a great deal of labor; but all that weighed nothing in the balance, for the simple question to be answered was not what he would bring, but what would be acceptable to God. For this the mind of God had to be made known; and henceforth it was patent that death was needful, if the offering and the offerer were to be accepted before the throne.

This then made known, was taken up by man after the flood in his ignorance and dread of God's wrath, and sadly perverted; for, not content with bringing animals in sacrifice to God, the heathen, and Israel too in their apostasy, resorted to human sacrifices to appease an offended deity. How the devil, if he cannot hide a truth from a man, will endeavor to pervert it, that, while appearing to do right, man may in reality do wrong! For a man is blind indeed, and a ready prey to the devil, unless subject to divine teaching.

That life must be surrendered on man's behalf, is a cardinal doctrine of Scripture; and that no life, but that of one who is man, will really avail before God, is also plainly taught us in the Word (Heb. 9:22); and this was God's purpose before the foundation of the world. But that God would accept on behalf of a sinner the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul, would be either a denial of the fall and of the sinfulness of man, or of the holiness of the Being whom man thus attempted to propitiate. Thus, whether we think of the need of death in sacrifice, or of the One by whose death all was accomplished for those who believe on Him, this is clear, that man of his own thoughts, or as led of the enemy, would never have understood what God could accept on behalf of the sinner: for, apart from divine teaching, man knows not the depth of his need, nor the holy nature of his God; and nothing more is wanted to demonstrate this than to leave man to act in such a manner after the counsel of his own will. Adam and Eve, and Cain, and men after the flood, are solemn witnesses to the truth of this allegation; but Scripture, which tells us of this, instructs us as to all that is needful for the vilest and the lost to have a perfect and everlasting standing before God. And the earliest teaching about it is provided in the history of the two brothers, Cain and Abel. So early in the world's history was the question raised, and when raised, settled forever by the Lord Himself - How shall one born in sin be accepted before Him?

Adam and Eve were transgressors who had thereby fallen from innocence. As such they must always stand out apart from their descendants. Cain and Abel were the two earliest born in sin - the condition in which we all were by nature. Hence God's ways with them, and the ground on which He could accept them, is full of instruction for us. Cain brought what he thought would do. Abel offered what he understood would be acceptable to God. By faith he did it. And the Lord, we read, settled the question speedily, simply, properly, and that forever. Speedily, for it was settled at once; simply, for "the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect"; properly, for it is the prerogative of God to determine as He will on what grounds He can allow a fallen creature such as man is, to be at home forever before Him. This was made clear to both the brothers. Abel understood it; Cain was fully aware of it, and his countenance fell. Both learned it from God, and we are to learn it from God likewise. The action of God determined the question for them; the Word of God settles the matter for us. But as they, so we, are taught it by God; and from the principles then established God has never departed, nor ever will; and three important ones are established for us by the history of Abel's sacrifice.

1) It is God's prerogative to declare on what terms He will accept one ruined by the fall. And He does that, never allowing a creature to act in this matter after the counsel

of its own will. For what creature that has sinned has a just estimate of God's character, and a due understanding of His holiness? For all this we are cast upon revelation. So to approach Him acceptably we need divine instruction.

2) If death is required ere we can stand in acceptance before Him, we are thereby indebted to another, and are proved to be helpless as regards ourselves; for it is a cardinal and self-evident truth, that no one can die to make atonement for himself; and no one by his own death can deal effectively with the question of his sinful nature. Needing then the death of the sacrifice, all our toil, all our efforts to establish by life service a standing before God, must, like Cain's, be labor in vain. We shall be going on a wrong line, and one which can never by any circuitous course, however long, lead us to God. Hence we need that which God tells us He has provided, and has also accepted - the death of His own Son on behalf of those who shall believe on Him. Truth about His Person, establishing His fitness to be the sinner's substitute, is brought out in succeeding revelations, which we need not here anticipate. The deep necessity of death is the point this history of Cain and Abel illustrates. Christ has died, and has also been raised from the dead - a token that God has accepted Him as the substitute and sin offering in all its fullness, and that nothing is wanted to make His atonement of full avail before God (Heb. 9:14). The importance of this truth is immense, and is especially needful in these days to be remembered, when sacrifice on the altar has ceased, as far as we are concerned, forever; for the principle. that death must COMP in on behalf of the sinner, has not been altered, nor ever will. Nay, it has been established on more solid ground than ever since the death of the Son of God has been set forth in the Word, and the danger to man if he rejects that truth stands out more distinctly than ever. "No man," says the Lord, "cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). Through the veil, that is to say His flesh, a new and living way, we have boldness to enter into the holiest by His blood (Heb. 10:19, 20).

3) The offerer, as we learned from Abel's sacrifice, is associated inseparably with the offering. "The LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect" (Gen. 4:4, 5). Abel was not accepted apart from the firstlings of his flock; and, as

we learn from Heb. 11:4, the bringing of his offering testified that he was righteous. The value of the offering was known only to God, and Abel stood before Him accepted according to all its value in His eyes. And Cain could see, and did see, that an accepted sacrifice had been that day presented to God. How close to the accepted worshiper was Cain! yet how far off was he spiritually from God! He knew his brother was accepted, as the Lord looked to his offering, but that acceptance availed not for him. The fact of a sacrifice having been accepted avails nothing for anyone who is not identified with it. Identified with it, as Abel was, the knowledge of its acceptance is of great importance. Hence the question becomes an individual one. Since God has accepted the sacrifice of His Son (proved to us by raising Him from the dead, and the sending of the Holy Ghost to teach us about it), is each one standing before God on the ground of that sacrifice, or is he not? If the former, each one is accepted according to all its value; if the latter, though, like Cain, such a one may know of its acceptance, he has no part in the benefits which result from it.

From this short history connected with these two brothers, who by birth after the flesh stood originally on precisely the same ground, these different principles are clearly to be deduced. But early as they were established, how many still need to learn about them! Blessed is that man for whom this history has not been written in vain.

Are We Looking at Death in Adam or Life in Christ? Extract From a Letter

We find that much of energy and grace that may appear in us, passes off like chaff before the wind. We are brought to learn humbling lessons at times. But I am sure some of us are too disposed to look at the death in Adam, rather than the life in Christ ; the ruin and sorrow that have come in through the first man, rather than the mighty, everlasting relief that has been introduced by the Second.

What a thought it is, that corruption and glory so closely touch each other in us! We carry within us the seeds of both. What an illustration is poor Lazarus of that: one moment the feast of dogs at the gate of a rich neighbor; the next, the holy, happy charge of angels carrying him to bright and glowing scenes on high. And this is comforting; and it should help to withdraw our eye from the seed of corruption to the seed of glory in us. Some of us are tempted to brood over the one, and scarcely to lift ourselves up to the other. But Jesus in resurrection invites our eye, and there faith turns. J.G. B.

As Is the Heavenly so Are the Heavenly Ones: Heavenly Character of Christianity

1 Cor. 15:48

It is of no little importance that we should recognize that Christianity in its very essence is as heavenly as He who inspired it. Many are they who accept its divine authorship, who have never adequately apprehended it to be an absolutely heavenly thing, though in an earthly locale. But practically we find that the less it is apprehended as heavenly, the less also will its divine aspect be before the soul. And this we may safely predicate, that it is impossible to understand its character and its scope, unless in its origin, in its essence, in its operation and in its end, it is seen to be altogether a heavenly product for a heavenly purpose. How contracted and how erroneous are the prevailing thoughts of what Christianity is. How little is it accepted as the reflection of a heavenly Christ in a heavenly people redeemed from the earth, who are here only for Himself and looking for translation at His coming!

"The first man.. of the earth, earthy," had been running his carnal and material course for forty centuries here below, before "the second Man" paid a visit of three and thirty years to the same scene, having been sent into it in grace to "the first." As man, He was, He is, "the heavenly," and by this title is contrasted with "the earthy." In God's reckoning He was "second Man," for all before God counts as one; and He was "last Adam," for there could be no more after. But more than this, He was "from [or out of] heaven" as the first was out of the earth, made of dust. Refused and cut off from the earth, having nothing, He is now the risen Man in the glory of God, and alike in incarnation and in resurrection is He-"the heavenly"-there, now and eternally!

Further, as is He, "the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly [ones]." There is, it is admitted, another aspect of Christianity in which birth and profession give status, and wherein are certain privileges and answering responsibilities; but what is now before us is a matter of race, and as to this we are born of God, are partakers of the divine nature, and just as truly as the angels, are we one of the heavenly families. The One "who lived, who died, who lives again," has redeemed unto Himself a chosen race of which, as the risen Man, He is the glorified Head; and this word - "as the heavenly [One]," such also are the heavenly [ones]" so constitutes Christianity in its very essence, that every bit of it which is a genuine thing before God, expresses in word or indeed, the cardinal truth that man is in the glory of God, and God is glorified thereby. One who was once visible upon earth, "in likeness of flesh of sin" (Rom. 8:3; N.T.) sits now in a glorified, but no less real, positive human body on the Father's throne.

From the glory of God, from the throne of the Father, and in the risen, exalted Man who fills all heaven with His peer less presence, Christianity has its origin; and in the power of the Holy Ghost alone, witness from thence of His exalted majesty and glory, it has its activities insofar as they are according to God. "When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" - marks its starting point both as to time and place. It is thus "the heavenly" gone

back to heaven - man in the glory of God-in whom it takes its rise; and it is this fact-the parent truth of Christianity- which imparts to it its distinctive character. It is a divine thing as He is divine; it is heavenly as He is heavenly; He is its sure foundation, its tried cornerstone, its immovable keystone, its crowning top-stone!

Two questions naturally arise here. 1) Have we truly accepted the fact that generically we are as heavenly as He who adorns the Father's throne? (Compare John 17:16 with Heb. 2:11.) 2) How far does the character and order of our lives make patent that our former earthly standing has been eternally abrogated to make room for the new and indissoluble relations we hold to the Man whom God has gratified His own heart in exalting to highest glory? Could believers answer these inquiries satisfactorily, it would be utterly impossible that they should go on in practical fellowship with the course and current of this world - governed by its principles, giving utterance to its maxims, aiding its objects, adopting its practices, and accepting its patronage, the fruit of which is as the apples of Sodom, and whose reaping shall ever be leanness and poverty and wretchedness of soul.

May He, "the heavenly," so blessedly connect with Himself the hearts of those who have accepted His heavenly call, and who know that what they have been brought into is as intrinsically of heaven as it is radically of God, that our Christianity may not comport with that of "this poor, faithless world," but may, through grace, be ever acquiring in an increasing degree a character suited to its divine origin, expressive of its celestial destiny and redolent with the graces and the virtues of a glorified Christ!

The Bible

This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe in it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand Object, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened in the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred content.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

The Blessings From Prophecy: for Those Not the Subject of It

The common notion is that prophecy never does people good unless it treats directly of the times and circumstances in which they themselves are found. There can be no greater fallacy. Abraham got more good from the prophecy about Sodom and Gomorrah than Lot did; yet it clearly was not because Abraham was there, for he was not in Sodom, while Lot was, who barely escaped and with little honor as we soon sorrowfully learn. But the Spirit teaches us by these two cases in the first book of the Bible His mind as to this question. I grant entirely that when the fulfillment of prophecy in all its details comes, there will be persons to glean the most express directions. But I am persuaded that the deepest value of prophecy is for those who are occupied with Christ, and who will be in heaven along with Christ, just as Abraham was with Jehovah, instead of being like Lot in the midst of the guilty Sodomites. If this be so, the book of Revelation ought to be of far richer blessing to us now who enjoy by grace heavenly associations with Christ, and are members of His body, though we shall be on high when the hour of temptation comes on those that dwell on the earth.

It is freely allowed that the Revelation will be an amazing comfort and help to the saints who may be there. But this is no reason why it should not be a still greater blessing now to those who will be caught up to Christ before that hour. The fact is, that both are true; only it is a higher and more intimate privilege to be with the Lord in the communion of His own love and mind before the things come to pass, though comfort will be given, when they come, to those that are immersed in them. Consequently we see in the Revelation (chaps. 4, 5, 6) already with the Lord the glorified saints of the Old and New Testaments who were taken up to meet Him, including those to whom the prophecy was primarily given. Afterward we see the judgments come in gradual succession; but when they take place, there are saints who evidently witness for God on earth. some suffering unto death, others preserved to be a blessed earthly people. To such, undoubtedly, the prophetic visions will be of value when the actual events arrive; but the most admirable value always is to faith before the events confirm the truth of the word. This is an invariable principle as to the prophetic word, and indeed in divine truth generally.

Building Materials: Very Good, Some Very Poor

Every Christian is building, and in 1 Corinthians 3 he is exhorted to "take heed how he buildeth." The Spirit of God here uses the figure of building to express the testimony of Christianity in this world. We can easily visualize a wall or a four-walled structure in the making - bit is added to bit, as many workmen do their jobs.

The workmen mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3 do not all do good building; some of them evidently build with enthusiasm and zeal, but put very poor materials into the building. We can easily see that this is not the building that the Lord spoke of in Matthew 16, when He said that upon the Rock of Peter's confession - "Christ, the Son of the living God" - He would build His Church. Christ will never place any bad materials in His building, and nothing shall ever destroy what He builds. He is building His Church, and that work is entirely in His hands. It is composed of every true believer in Himself in this age.

Now there is that other building which men build in the world - Christianity as entrusted to the hands of men. There is no other foundation but Jesus Christ (v. 11). To depart from that foundation would be to leave Christianity itself. Each believer is within the scope of Christianity in this world, and each is building something into that testimony. We may not have seriously weighed it before, but we are adding something to that building. Now the scripture before us is "let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (v. 10). Why should there be any need for such an exhortation? Verse 12 supplies the answer by listing some of the materials being put into the building; these fall into two classes - "Gold, silver, precious stones," and "wood, hay, stubble."

The standard by which to test the building materials is a divine standard-that which will stand the test of fire. Every bit of material that goes into that building is going to pass through the fire, for we read, "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (v. 13). So then only fireproof materials will be of any account. The Laodiceans were counseled to buy "gold tried in the fire" that they might be rich, and not to trust in what they called riches.

It is a solemn thought that each of us is day by day building something that is going to be tested by fire - God's fire that will consume everything that is not according to His mind and His Word. Such being the case, we may well inquire how we can build things that will withstand the heat of His discerning judgment in that day. We may ask, Just what are "gold, silver, precious stones" with which we should build? and what are the very combustible materials which we should avoid placing in this building of Christianity on earth?

In order to answer this we may notice first that the things that will stand the fire test are - comparatively speaking-very small in bulk. A bale of hay would make a sizeable contribution to any wall. Hay is very good in its place, and some hay is much better and higher priced than other hay, but none of it is suitable fireproof building material. Wood also builds quickly and soon makes an appearance before the eyes of man, but it is no good in this building. Gold, silver, and precious stones make little bulk; but after the fire has passed they will be left - and their builder will receive a

reward.

Further, in considering what these figurative materials represent to us in our daily building, we need to remember that this chapter is not dealing with a Christian living for the world - trying to get rich, going after its pleasures, etc.-which is spoken of in other parts of the Word of God. The whole question here is what we are placing into our Christian testimony. Maybe you have not thought of yourself as such a builder, but if you will examine the scripture you will find that you are.

It is apparent then that things which make the greatest bulk and are best seen by men are most likely not to stand the fire test. Christendom is filled with materials being built into it (and by real Christians) which will be burned up. (There are also false doctrines that corrupt that are mentioned as being put in by bad builders, but our subject here is more what we as Christians build.) Men have always admired things that make a big display, and such things are highly accredited in Christendom. If we go back to Genesis we find building spoken of in the 4th, 6th, and 11th chapters. First, Cain built a city after he killed his righteous brother and then went out from God's presence. His city was popular, for he incorporated into it all that he could to make men who are away from God happy. The cities of today are basically the same; that is, they have everything that man can conceive to please the human heart which is apart from God. This first building mentioned appeared big and grand, but was destroyed in the flood. Second, Noah built an ark on dry ground at God's command, and "became heir of the righteousness that is by faith." His building was not approved but so scorned by his fellow men that not one beside his own family entered it. Third, the whole world banded together to build the tower of Babel, but God wrote confusion on the venture and scattered t h e people. This may give us some idea of what men naturally respect in the way of building in the world; that which is of God is never popular.

Remember the word, "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). This is an important principle, and should make us wary of anything that has popular approval.

Another Old Testament scripture that will throw some light on men's thoughts is found in 1 Samuel 4. Israel had been beaten by the Philistines and instead of owning their sin as the cause, they sent for the Ark of God - that which spoke of Jehovah's presence - in order that it might save them. That sounded good, and all the people thought so, for when it came into the camp they all shouted "until the earth rang again." Surely this was a great work of God, they must have thought if not said. And so today, if men would gather thousands of people together and shout out the truth of Christianity until the earth would ring, it would be praised as a great work of God; but God's work is not done in that manner. Men would have organized a great campaign to introduce Christianity on the continent of Europe, and sent advance agents to prepare the way with great advertising; but God sent Paul and Silas over there with no such human agency to help, and the first thing they did when they landed in Macedonia was to speak to some women at the riverside. Later these faithful servants landed in jail in order that the jailor might be saved. How differently men would have opened such a program! Yet from that lowly beginning the gospel spread all over Europe.

It is very easy for us to have men's thoughts in the things of God, for they abound all around us; but if we are to take heed how we build, how we contribute to the testimony of Christianity in the world, in view of the judgment seat of Christ, we need to dislodge human thoughts and seek divine guidance. This will be found in the Word of God.

If we go back to 1 Samuel, we find that even the uncircumcised Philistines could value and appreciate such a crowd and such a shout; they understood human thoughts and pretensions, and they were terribly afraid. Their fears, however, were groundless; for God was not in that great shout, and He allowed His Ark to be taken by the Philistines. But if the Philistines could value human pretension, they could not understand human weakness which counts on God to work in His way. In the 7th chapter of the same book, Israel came together to mourn, to confess their sin, to put away strange gods, to pour out water as a symbol of their weakness. This the Philistines did not understand and fearlessly went into battle against Israel, to be smitten when God thundered from heaven. And so today, even the unsaved will join in and applaud any great movement that can garner thousands and make the earth ring. Even the prophet Elijah could understand fire, and wind, and earthquake, but not the "still small voice" that does wonders.

Now to go to the last book of the Old Testament, we read that of the small remnant of Israel that returned from Babylonian captivity many had turned to their own ways, and away from God. They were saying, "It is vain to serve God." Is not this heard in the land today? But, fellow Christian, is it really vain to serve God and walk carefully before Him? of course not! However, in such days as Malachi describes, there were some who feared the Lord and thought upon His name; and these came together often to speak about the Lord and His things. It was not all Israel - days were gone when all Israel could be gathered together - or great crowds gathered together to speak of the Lord. It was not anything that man would consider great; it was what was despised according to human judgment. But God approved it, and He hearkened and heard. He stooped, as it were, especially to listen to their conversation; and He had a special record written before Him about this little thing that He greatly valued. Surely in the language of 1 Corinthians it was "gold, silver, precious stones" in His eyes. When conditions were bad they did not say, "It is all over," or, "It is vain to serve God"; nor did they fold their hands in self-complacency, but were actively engaged to encourage one another in a simple and faithful testimony to their Lord. They were in that sense building, but not with the hay of greatness and man's approval.

Then when we come to the book of Revelation (chaps. 2 and 3), we find the ruin of the church on earth described (not what Christ is building, but that committed to men), and we find great boasting at the end and great deeds mentioned; but what especially received the Lord's greatest commendation is, "Thou... hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name" (Rev. 3:8). And to whom was this spoken? To those who had "little strength." No great deeds! No crowds that could make the earth ring! No approval of men, but rather the contrary. Others might boast of great bales of hay, great efforts to revive the testimony of Christianity. "Wood, hay, stubble" may be built very high and receive acclaim on every hand, but what will stand the test of fire are those things done in simple obedience to the Word of God, and faithfulness to Christ's name. This is the "gold, silver, precious stones" that will stand the test at the judgment seat of Christ.

O fellow Christian, whose approval do we want? Do we want to make a show and impress men, or simply to please God, and leave the results with Him? Far be it from me to speak one word against one being faithful in giving out the gospel to those around us; we should remember the unsaved all around and be ready to speak a word for Christ. It is to our shame that we are not more faithful, but let us not seek popular appeal or that which has human approval. Let us seek to communicate "spiritual things by spiritual means" (as a better translation of 1 Corinthians 3 says). Men may act on the principle that the results justify any means used, but God's Word says, "A man is not

crowned except he strive lawfully"; or in other words, "wood, hay, stubble" will be burned up and only "gold, silver, precious stones" survive the fire. The one who built with the latter will receive a reward, or be "crowned," as in the illustration of an athlete (see 2 Tim. 2).

May the Lord grant us each grace to seek more and more to witness for Him in this world, and in everything to do all according to His Word and in devotedness to His name. Then it will not be a matter of seeking to do great things before men, even ostensibly for His sake, but doing all in view of the day which shall soon declare of what "sort" the work was - not how "much." Each of us can seek to encourage others and speak often of Him. If we follow the little remnant from the days of Malachi to the days when the Lord Jesus came (see Luke 2), we find a very aged widow speaking of Him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. And cannot we speak of Him? We should remember that even our presence in the little Bible reading, or prayer meeting, is helping to maintain that little testimony to His name, and will surely receive its reward.

The Call of Abram

Gen. 12:1-10

The call of Abram, the father of the faithful, is evidently of special importance in this respect, that it is the first public separation of one called out of this world; and this gives a very particular position to the one so called out.

The people of God were always morally, and must necessarily be, a people separate from the world. But Abram was the expression of something different. He was not merely to be 'a godly man in his family, but a godly man called out of his family. It was God exercising and establishing a title over those He had morally and spiritually called, which broke the ties of nature, claiming them and calling them out into public testimony of separation. This distinguished the call of Abram - the public assertion of the claims of God over His people.

The call of Israel out of Egypt is somewhat analogous, though it was not said to Israel, "Come out," but to Pharaoh, "Let My people go," because it was the assertion of the right of power over the prince of this world regarding God's own people. Therefore, it was said to Pharaoh, "Let My people go"; and on his refusing to do this, God shows His power in redemption - first by blood, then by leading them out by the Red Sea.

Thus it was not in the case of Israel the invitation of the power of grace to those who were its subjects to break the tie, but the assertion of the power of God over the enemy, breaking down every claim of the world. In the case of Abram, it was not precisely that - it was an address to Abram himself-the claim of God over the person thus called. It was love working, not a claim of power. It was grace made effectual in its working in the heart of Abram.

For a time, however, the tie of nature was not broken; Abram went out with Terah his father. He did not leave his father's house; he lingered after something. He did not fully surrender himself to the Lord's will at once, and therefore the Lord could not show him the land of Canaan. Abram had left a great deal, but he stopped short of Canaan. It is true he had left his country and his kindred, but he had not left the nearest tie of nature-his father's house - therefore God could not show Canaan to him while he was clinging to Terah, and going but halfway with God. Thus he stays in Haran.

So it is with us, if there is still cleaving to us a desire after that which naturally belongs to us; there will not be the full entering into those things that God is ready and waiting to show us. All the communications of God to Abram, as to what Canaan was, took place after, or consequent on, his arrival in Canaan. God puts the position he is to be in, in direct contrast with natural ties; He said to Abram, "Get thee out... unto a land that I will show thee." He knew that natural ties were mixed up with what Abram had to leave; but he was to leave his country and all, having no other warrant for it but God's word. God had called him, and the call implied a claim. It was not merely the question of the public government of the world; Abram is entirely separated from that. He is to be a stranger to his father's house, and a stranger still when brought into Canaan. It was the Lord's love resting

on an individual, and associating him with all that He had in His mind, and putting him into the place of all the promises of blessing. We see what he was called out from in Josh. 24:2: "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods." Men were not merely wicked, but God having manifested in the deluge the power of government in the world, Satan got hold of that power in the minds of men, who were thus led to worship devils, to whom they ascribed the power, and not to God.

It was this which formed the occasion of this public testimony for God in separating Abram from all around him; it separated him totally from every tie which was recognized in the world. He was not merely to be righteous and to be a worshiper - all that is true-but he was to be connected in his own person with a glory the world had lost sight of, for it had put the devil in God's place; thus it says in Acts 7:2, "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham." God calls Abram out from the world to a glory set before him. Glory is revealed, and one called out by the knowledge of it. We have thus in principle the public call of God of the heirs of glory out of the world; the world is not set right, but left just as it was; and we find now a special link of connection set up between God and Abram. God reveals Himself to him, and says, Come out "unto a land that I will show thee."

The life of Abram depended on a present communication from God, an immediate present connection between himself and God, which was to be kept up by the Lord making good all He has promised. So the Lord reveals Himself to our souls, and gives His word as a sure ground of our conduct; and, blessed be God. we can count upon His infallible faithfulness, and live by faith in daily, constant, unceasing dependence on Him, to lead on to the possession of the desires of our hearts. But we find also that the Lord's promises involved the acting of Abram likewise; for while he does not leave Terah, God cannot bring him into Canaan. He could not enjoy Terah and Canaan together. God took care of that; if the father's house be not left, Canaan cannot be shown. The blessing to faith is found only in the path of faith. God's call gives the warrant for acting; and so far as Abram acts in dependence on God, the promises are made good to him.

In all that is spoken of Canaan, it is not rest that is before us. Look at the book of Joshua; there it is conflict. Does Abram get rest? He had not so much as to set his foot upon, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob a heavenly position, but with conflict, he gets as soon as he had left Terah and come into the land of Canaan; for the Canaanites are still there. The thing that God calls us to, we do not get now; and that which marks the completion of Christ's work, is that He sat down. We sit down in heavenly places in Christ, but do we get rest? No; we have to fight with wicked spirits in heavenly places. The saint is called into a place of rest, but as yet gets nothing. Thus we see that the worship of devils was not set aside, but that Abram was called out and brought into the promised land; but not to rest, because the Canaanites were there.

"And the LORD appeared unto Abram" (v. 7). He now appears to him in the land. It is not the call which sets us in the place of worship; but as soon as we enter the land, then we can worship, because our relationship with God is known and settled and enjoyed. Before it is the walk of faith, but that is not worship. So we, as seated in the heavenly places, can worship, knowing our relationship as sons. "And there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD." In Heb. 11:8-10, we get three things as regards the power of faith in Abram.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." v. 8. He went in simple present dependence, leaning on the promise of God. There was the life of faith.

When in the land, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." v. 9. The Lord's appearing to him was the foundation of his worship, the Lord known in the land; and there he built his altar. The Lord further explains His purposes and intentions to him, and how they were to be accomplished. Thus he got prophetic knowledge. But it was not this which sustained Abram's soul. He could say, I know now how it is all to be accomplished. It is in my seed, and not in myself. I am a stranger here. How then was his soul sustained while he was a stranger?

3) "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." v. 10. Thus Abram's soul was not merely brought to worship, but he was sustained by a closer communion with that God who had chosen him, in faith that He would build the city Himself.

I have been struck that in Revelation 4, where, speaking of the throne of God's government, there are peoples and angels and assemblies and living creatures, etc., a whole population there; but when I come to the heavenly city (Rev. 21), there is a high wall and streets and gates of pearl; but where are the people? Not one there, because the people are lost in the idea of the glory of God and the Lamb; and nothing else is thought of (though we know it is the Lamb's bride), for God and the Lamb are there. It was looking for this city which made Abram a pilgrim and a stranger. The world could not understand him, and might have said, Now Abram is in the land, what has he got? Nothing; for he could not explain to them how it was, but he had seen by faith that city of which God was the builder. We see then Abram is called; and having by faith entered into the conditions of the calling, he gets into the land; and when there he has a present revelation of the Lord, which is the ground of his worship; but it is not rest, the Canaanite be in g there.

If God has called me out, I must leave the world just as it is, and not think of setting that right. God has called me out of the world into connection with Himself, and I cannot connect any natural tie with such an association. You cannot hold relationship with Christ and the world at the same time. The worship of God is founded on the knowledge of the heavenly position we are in, being called out of the world into fellowship with Himself. We have not a single thing in common with the world. We can sit and sing of redemption, just as if we were now in heaven. My relationships with God will not be in the least changed when I get home; they will be just the same then as they are now; and there is no ground upon which we shall be there, that we are not upon now. He has set us in Christ; and we can say, as in Deut. 26:3, "I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country," not shall come. We are there, and have t h e understanding of how God will accomplish his promises-"in thy seed." Not the earthly rest in the fulfillment of promise to man, but heavenly rest where He dwells, where the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof - that is where He has brought us.

God says to Abram, "I will show thee," "I will bless thee." Thus it is now a particular relationship on a new ground with persons He has called, and has its existence in separation from the world. It is well for our souls to have the relationship into which we are called distinctly before our minds, that we may know how to worship and be sustained by the strength which it supplies. And if the foundations of the earth are out of course, I am not of it. Having the sentence of death in myself, I

shall not fear death; but we shall have the comfort and joy of the place we belong to. The sweetness of a calm is better known when the storm is raging without. May the Lord give us the true revelation of Himself!

Christ — Not the World

With this object in view, and this only, we shall find that what we have "will do," will suffice for our need, and, "looking off unto Jesus," happy lightness of step and an unhindered walk will be the result.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb. 12:2.

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Matt. 24:1, 2.

The hearts of the disciples then, as too often now, were occupied with the present appearances, and the great show of grandeur in God's service; the halo of associations was bright before their eyes. But Jesus passes sentence on all that even they admired on earth. In truth, when He left the temple, all was gone which gave it value in the sight of God. Outside Jesus, what is there in this world but vain show or worse? And how does the Lord deliver His own from the power of tradition and every other source of attraction for the heart? He opens out the communications of His own mind, and casts the light of the future on the present.

How often worldliness unjudged in a Christian's heart betrays itself by want of relish for God's unfolding of what He is going to do! How can I enjoy the coming of the Lord if it is to throw down much that I am seeking to build up in the world? A man, for instance, may be trying to gain or keep a status by his ability, and hoping that his sons may outstrip himself by the superior advantages they enjoy. On some such idea is founded all human greatness; it is "the world," in fact. Christ's coming again is a truth which demolishes the whole fabric, because if we really look for His coming as that which may be from day to day - if we realize that we are set like servants at the door with the handle in hand, waiting for Him to knock (we know not how soon), and desiring to open to Him immediately ("Blessed are those servants!") - if such is our attitude, how can we have time or heart for that which occupies the busy Christ-forgetting world?

Moreover, we are not of the world, even as Christ is not; and as for means and agents to carry on its plans, the world will never be in lack of men to do its work. But we have a higher business, and it is beneath us to seek the honors of the world that rejects our Lord. Let our outward position be ever so menial or trying, what so glorious as in it to serve our Lord Christ? And He is coming.

In the cross we see God humbling Himself - the only One of all greatness stooping low to save my soul - the only One who commands all, becoming the servant of all. A person cannot receive the truth of the cross without having in measure his walk in accord with the spirit of it. Yet how much saints of God regard the cross, not so much as that by which the world is crucified unto them and they unto the world, but rather as the remedy by which they are set free from fear, to make

themselves a comfortable place in the world! The Christian ought to be the happiest of men, but his happiness should consist in what he knows is his portion in and with Christ.

Meanwhile, our service and obedience are to be formed according to the spirit of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Man's evil and God's grace thoroughly came out in the cross; all met there; and upon this great truth is founded what is said often in Scripture, "The end of all things is at hand"; because all has been brought out in moral ways and in dispensational dealings between God and man.

The Christian Is Not of the World

There are believers who take part in the world's concerns from generous and philanthropic motives - simply with a desire to do good, to relieve sufferings, or to check the aboundings of iniquity. We cannot question their benevolence, their high principles, or their sincere wish to do God service. But the purest motives will not lead a Christian right if he fails to understand his heavenly calling; and the question still remains whether these believers, sincere and excellent as they are, have entered into God's thoughts about what He would have them do.

If God were still carrying out His earthly purposes, if His design now were to bless or to improve the world, such a course as that indicated might be the right one for a believer to pursue. But this is not the case. The world is not going on to blessing, but to judgment, and a Christian is called to walk in separation from it. If he seeks to follow the guidance of Scripture alone, what would he say then to the idea of attempting by political and social means to improve the world? Would he not say, God has reserved the blessing of the earth till Christ comes; am I then to attempt it earlier? or can I, by going on without God, answer any good purpose? Am I more conscious of the evil than He is, or better able to redress it? If He has clearly foretold that the world is hastening on to the judgment it has incurred by rejecting Christ, can I arrest the judgment by my efforts, or shall I entangle myself in the system which is thus awaiting its doom? I am called to fellowship with Christ, and if He has bid 'Christ wait, shall not I, His fellow heir, wait with Him? If God is now calling a people outside the world, is not this my place, instead of plunging into the thick of its affairs, hoping to bless where God is purposing to judge? I cannot, by becoming responsible for the world's government, hope to avert the sentence. And as no man would paint and ornament a house whose foundations he knew to be giving way, the mere attempt to improve the world shows that I am not expecting its judgment, and helps to foster the delusion that peace and safety are ahead instead of the sudden destruction which God's Word announces. True benevolence demands that I warn those inside of its impending fall, instead of lulling them into security by joining in its decoration.

All this, however, it may be contended, is mere inference from the general principle that the Church is heavenly in its character. Is this inference supported by the directions given in the Word as to the walk of individual Christians? It is clear that the early disciples were called to share their Master's rejection. "If any man," says our Lord, "will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Matt. 16:24. He Himself was giving up His place of earthly power, and taking that of earthly rejection. So long as such is His attitude toward the world; that is, until His kingdom is established in glory, this is the fellowship into which He calls His disciples. It is no remote inference, but a direct, express statement.

The cross was the punishment of felons and slaves - not only a cruel, but a shameful death. To take up the cross was to assume a position outside the world, the object of the world's enmity and contempt. This then is what Jesus calls His disciples to do. Nor did this cease with His death. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world

would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also." John 15:18-20.

This shows what the early disciples were to expect. Will it be said that the world has changed? that Christianity has so spread as to make such language inapplicable now? In the first of the passages just quoted, Jesus joins His followers with Himself in rejection. For how long? No time is named, but as He utters these words in taking up the Church character and laying aside the Messianic, it seems clear that the rejection of His followers lasts during this state of things. In His Messiahship, He will be exalted and His followers with Him. This conclusion is confirmed by the other passage cited, which contrasts two classes- the world, and those who are "not of the world." These are spoken of as opposed, not for a time, but in character and principle, and therefore as long as the age lasts. It is asserted generally that believers are "not of the world," and are therefore the objects of the world's hatred.

I admit that the outward marks of this antagonism are much effaced. Religion has become worldly, and the world has become religious. Christians, forgetting their heavenly calling, have struck hands with the world, bid for its favor and places, plunged into its pleasures and pursuits, and earned its patronage and rewards. But does this alter the Word of God which says that the believer is "not of the world," or that the world hates what is not of itself? Alas! we measure God's truth by our own failures, and because the world tolerates a worldly Christianity, conclude that Christ and the world are reconciled! They are not; and if there is a truce between the world and His followers, it proves no change of the world toward Him, but the luke-warmness of those who profess His name. Scripture, instead of teaching that the spread of Christian profession would soften the distinction between true believers and the world, makes it one of the heaviest charges against the professing church, that it has committed fornication with the kings of the earth. The commerce between the Church and the world is infidelity to Christ. The amity between them shows not the conversion of the world to Christianity, but the conformity of Christians to the world.

Indeed, when we look at the descriptions uniformly given of the world in the New Testament, it is amazing that there can be any doubt upon the subject. What is the world as there portrayed? It is presented under two different, but kindred, aspects, as the place which has rejected Christ, and as an organized system of things with Satan at its head. Everybody admits that Christ was rejected, but that the guilt of His rejection still clings to and characterizes the world, is a truth almost entirely overlooked. We are so accustomed to regard Christ's death from the side of God's grace, that we forget to regard it from the side of His government. The cross stands before our minds simply as the means by which sin was put away, and the rejection of Christ by the sinner is deemed nothing more than his own individual rejection of salvation. But Jesus is set forth in Scripture both as the author of salvation and as God's anointed ruler; and in each of these characters His rejection involves much more than the loss of personal blessing.

It is not only, however, for having rejected Jesus as a Savior that the world is under condemnation. God sent His Son into this world as the anointed One, the rightful ruler, and the world has cast Him out. Can this be a matter of indifference to God? On the contrary, it is a matter of deepest moment. What God sees in the world, and what He expects the believer to see, is a place guilty of having

rejected His Son as its rightful Lord.

The Church As the House of God: 1 Corinthians 3

1 Corinthians 3

We may notice two aspects in which the assembly (Church) of God is spoken of in Scripture; first, "the body of Christ" (Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:18); second, "the house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:22). In this second aspect there is again a distinction made in the Word of God between the building as it will be in heaven, when every living stone will have been fitted into its place and the whole have grown "unto a holy temple in the Lord," and this building viewed as at any time existing on the earth. Of the former it is evident that Matt. 16:18 speaks, where the Lord declares that against what He builds the gates of hell shall not prevail; and again Eph. 2:20, 21, where the whole building is "fitly framed together," not yet completed, but "groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord." Of the latter our chapter especially speaks, besides Eph. 2:22, 1 Tim. 3:15, and other passages, where the assembly of God as existing upon earth, and not in its future, is viewed as "the house of God," "the temple of God," "a habitation of God through the Spirit." This was formed on the day of Pentecost by the gathering together in one of the children of God who before were scattered abroad; and the Holy Ghost descended and filled the house - the assembly of God - with His presence.

In the wilderness, the habitation of God was a tabernacle; and when that was consecrated, the glory of Jehovah descended and filled it (Exod. 40:34, 35). In the kingdom, the tabernacle gave place to Solomon's temple, and again the glory of Jehovah filled it (1 Kings 8:10, 11). On the day of Pentecost, God again took possession of His house by the Holy Ghost.

But ere we proceed, one thing should be noticed with respect to the assembly as the body of Christ. In that, Scripture speaks of a Head and members vitally united together by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 12:13). In the house of God, on the contrary, we have stones and a foundation, and cornerstone and a master builder, or architect, and the living God as He who dwells in it. To confuse one line of thought with the other is ruinous to "rightly dividing the word of truth." Moreover, there is no such thing as a member of a church; in Scripture, it is membership of "the body of Christ," and a member of Christ can never cease to be a member; the figure of the natural body is used to show its oneness; and of this natural body, Psalm 139 speaks: "In Thy book all my members were written,... when as yet there was none of them." How much more true of those who were given to Christ before the foundation of the world. (Compare John 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also.")

His body is Himself - His own "flesh" - which He nourishes and cherishes; and therefore there cannot be such a thing as a false member of the body of Christ; but there may be bad materials built into the house, as we shall see. And further, this union between Christ and His body is so intimate that in 1 Cor. 12:12 the whole body; that is, Head and members, is called "Christ," just as in Gen. 5:2 it is said that God made man, male and female and called their name "Adam."

Returning to our chapter, we note that all the saints, at any time existing upon the earth, are not only living stones of the heavenly temple, but have been gathered together by human instrumentality into the assembly of God; or, to keep the figure used, built into the temple in which the Spirit of God dwells; in the case of the Corinthians, by Paul and other laborers.

But let us bear in mind that there is not a trace in Scripture of such a thing as independent churches forming themselves into associations according to their own convictions. The only thing known in Scripture is "the assembly of God." Into that the New Testament workmen gathered - the house of God - into that the stones were built. In verse 10 Paul declares that the grace of God was given to him as the architect, and he had laid the one and only foundation - others might build on it, but other foundation could not be laid. Mark, what is spoken of here is not the foundation of a sinner's salvation, but of the building which is the habitation of God - His temple upon earth.

There has been no other architect but Paul appointed by God; there can be no other foundation laid, though many have taken the place of master builders, and laid down the foundations for the churches they sought to form, in creeds, confessions of faith, etc.

If we revert to the tabernacle wherein God dwelt in the wilderness, Moses was, as it were, the architect, receiving the patterns from God (Exod. 25:40; 26:30); and David, in the same way, was architect of the temple, giving the pattern to Solomon of "all that he had by the Spirit" (1 Chron. 28:11, 12). Nor could there have been a deviation from it in either case.

Alas! we in this dispensation have done so, and formed churches according to our own patterns, one of the chief reasons being, that the idea of "God's house" has been lost; and the Church has been regarded more as the dwelling place of saints than of God the Holy Ghost. For it is evident, if we regard it as the dwelling place of God, His dwelling must be according to His own mind; and any departure from it is a step toward bringing it into that condition when it could no longer be His habitation, though His patience is long, and His true saints will ever know His presence with them till they are caught up to heaven. The foundation then of the house of God upon earth is "Jesus Christ," and Paul says, "I have laid the foundation"; but note when the heavenly temple is spoken of, apostles and prophets are the foundation stones (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14), Jesus Christ Himself being t h e chief cornerstone.

To return, Paul having laid the foundation, others built on it. "But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." "Gold, silver, precious stones" might be built, or "wood, hay, stubble" might be added; it depended upon the builders, but the coming day would declare it. Paul himself could look forward to that day, and view his work in the light of it; those whom he had gathered, he looked to be his hope and joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord at His coming. The work would stand when tried by fire; such a one's work would abide, and he received a reward. "Ye are our glory and joy." 1 Thess. 2:20.

Second, a converted man is supposed (v. 15), but his work will not stand the fire - the scrutiny of God's holy judgment. He suffers loss as a workman, though he himself is saved, "yet so as by fire." It is as a man who has surrounded himself with possessions, from the midst of which he is saved, but they are burned; his work is not his "glory and joy."

Third, there is not only a bad workman, but he himself corrupts the temple of God. He is corrupt himself, and therefore he is a corrupter. "Him shall God destroy." Now mark what was the

occasion of this solemn warning of the Apostle. The Corinthians were a clever people in this world, and they were beginning to bring their own cleverness and energy into the temple of God; they had not learned to become fools that they might be wise. Our own wise thoughts are our greatest hindrance. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." To bring in human wisdom into the assembly of God is so far to begin to render it unfit for His habitation; it is as if Bezaleel had deemed that his own wisdom could deviate from the patterns given to Moses, instead of which he had wisdom given him to follow out the patterns.

Thus far we have looked at the building. If we now turn to 1 Corinthians 12, we shall there find the Spirit giving us by the Apostle, as it were, the furniture and services of the house as he received them from the Lord. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." 1 Cor. 14:37, 38. Alas! we may say again, that we of this dispensation have been careless as to the building, so that not only have other foundations been sought to be laid, and bad materials built in, but the internal orderings of the assembly also have not been according to the commandments of the Lord.

The first point the Apostle notes is the Lordship of Christ, of which the Holy Spirit was the witness. The assembly is the sphere of spiritual gifts or manifestations. Anything spoken derogatory of Jesus was not of the Holy Ghost, and no one could say Jesus is Lord but by the same Holy Ghost. Here then is affirmed a solemn first principle, that the Holy Ghost bears witness in every spiritual manifestation to the Lordship of Christ. Compare Heb. 3:6: "Christ... Son over His own" (that is, God's own) "house." "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit"; and He divides to each "severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12:4, 11), so that all needful gifts are from the Holy Spirit. Again, "There are differences of administrations [ministries], but the same Lord." All services are directly under the one and same Lord. "And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

In whatever way (and there are diversities) a service is carried on, the energizing power is of God. To use a figure, the various members of my body are gifts to my body. Take my hand, as an example. It is one of the most necessary and important, but with it I feed myself. That is a ministry to my body. But how is the operation of feeding myself to be wrought? It is by the enabling power of Him in whom I live and move, and have my being. So in the assembly. There are gifts of the Holy Ghost; the ministries are under the Lord, and the enabling power is of God. It is not because I have a gift that I am to use it either at my own will, or under the will and control of others, save as all ought to be subject one to the other, as "God hath tempered the body together," but under the Lord Christ. If this had been recognized at Corinth, there would not have been the confusion there was, nor would they have gloried in man, had they recognized that it was not human power or wisdom, but God who operated each gift in each one - "It is the same God which worketh all in all" (1 Cor. 12:6).

The Apostle then speaks of the varied gifts and, using the comparison of the body, shows how all were in the unity of the body, and not for self. My hand cannot be for itself, nor for one part or other which it may esteem more highly, but for the body. "Now," says the Apostle, "ye are the body of Christ" (v. 27); and "God hath set some in the church [assembly]," etc. The ordering of the house then in its services and furniture is of God; and what we need to realize is, that any other order is

confusion. It may not appear so to human wisdom - with it human arrangement would be best - but in God's house it is ruinous disorder.

I would notice the difference now between the sign-gifts; that is, such as were for signs-tongues, miracles, etc.; and edification-gifts, as teaching, exhortation, etc. In Ephesians 4 we have no sign-gifts mentioned at all. There the Spirit is more speaking of what was the body and bride of Christ, of what He nourishes and cherishes, and will finally present to Himself without a spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. We find then that the gifts mentioned there are for the perfecting of the saints, etc., "Till we all come... unto the measure of the stature of t h e fullness of Christ"; that is, they continue till each individual member of the whole Church is come to the one perfect Man in glory. We are now all growing up into Christ by the ministry of these abiding gifts: first, apostles and prophets-those we have in the Word of God. And oh what wisdom of God to give them to us in that way, so that we have unchangeable foundations! "Are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20). Then we have evangelists, pastors, and teachers - for gathering first, and then perfecting the members of the body. These we may always count upon. They are gifts of the Spirit, given by an ascended Lord, who has led captivity captive for the nourishing of His own body.

But the Apostle tells us in 1 Corinthians 14 that tongues were for a sign, not to those who believe, but to them that believe not. God has given to the assembly not only gifts for its own edification, but those whereby it might minister the grace of God to the world. First and foremost, tongues, by means of which every man might hear in his own dialect in which he was born, the wonderful works of God. Nor were the bodies forgotten, but gifts of healing told that the gospel of God was not words only, blessed as they were, but active love to men; and we find, consequently, that while handkerchiefs from Paul's body healed the sick Ephesians (Acts 19:12), as a witness accompanying the word which all Asia heard, yet Paul left Trophimus, himself an Ephesian, sick at Miletum (2 Tim. 4:20), and that when he was begging Timothy to come to him; not that some in the Church were not healed, as Dorcas, but the aspect of such gifts was to the world.

Two things might be affirmed as reasons why they have ceased: 1) the unfaithfulness of the Church, which was already using her ornaments of grace, as in the case at Corinth, for self-exaltation and show, and not to exhibit to the world the worthiness of her Lord; 2) and the fact that Christianity is now "believed on in the world" (1 Tim. 3:16) and needs not miraculous power to establish it; that has been done. But, on the contrary, we are told that in the latter days some shall depart from the faith, and give heed to seducing spirits, etc. (1 Tim. 4:1); that is what has happened. At Corinth they came "behind in no gift." We no longer have sign-gifts; but it is important to see that what we have is set by God in the assembly, and ordered and energized by Him.

In chapter 14 we have distinctly the ordering of the assembly, which the disorder of the Corinthians had upset.

The great thing was, "Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church." "Let all things be done unto edifying." So much was this to be sought that the prophets were to speak two or three, and the others judge. We can easily see that at any meeting more than two or three speaking would not be to edification. Profit would be lost if too much were given to digest. All might speak if they could do so to edification. If there was a revelation, all must give place to that. We cannot have

that now, as revelation is complete; but the order of God's house we can maintain as against disorder. Moreover, it is true that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst." That abides, though the unity of the building has been destroyed; and of no section can it be said that it is "the assembly of God"; yet there is no other ground for those who bow to the Lordship of Christ to take than to gather to the name of Jesus Christ, to maintain that He is Lord of all ministries and services, to own the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, who abides, as sent by Christ, and not on account of our faithfulness, and that all gifts are His, and that the power of using them is alone of God, as also the power of worship. It is useless to assume anything; it is blessed ever to count on the faithfulness of God, for "He abideth faithful"; and thus, What we have, hold fast till He comes.

Circumstances of Daily Life: Do We Recognize God?

It is worth while, in our reading of the Scriptures, to observe the presence and working of God in the ordinary affairs of everyday life. For instance, in Genesis 37, Joseph is seen on his way to visit his brethren in obedience to his father's command, but is unable to find them. It is said, "A certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field."

It so happened that the "certain man" had heard Joseph's brethren say they were going to Dothan, and thus he was able to direct Joseph on his way. Now, what believer would dare to say that the finding and directing of Joseph as here recorded happened by chance, and that God had nothing to do with the "certain man" finding him in that field?

Great events often spring from seemingly small and unexpected causes, and from what seem to us trivial and commonplace things. When we "know as we are known," and understand fully the working of God in the lives of those who trust Him, we shall be filled with wonder to know how constantly He was present, though often unknown to ourselves, and how much and how continually we were indebted to Him. There is great truth in the words of the poet:

"He everywhere hath sway

And all things serve His might."

When David was pursuing the Amalekites who had smitten Ziklag, an Egyptian, apparently dead, was found in the field (1 Sam. 30:11). This man, after being restored, was able to give David the information he needed to enable him to overtake the Amalekites and recover all they had taken away. God used this weak and apparently impossible instrument to promote the victory of David by giving him directions.

We do well to ponder these simple narratives and observe the ways of God's working in everyday life. For it is blind unbelief to limit the presence of God to that which is called miraculous and supernatural, and not to see and trust Him in the things which we call commonplace and ordinary.

It is a matter of divine revelation that God commanded the ravens to bring Elijah bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening. Yet God was not more truly present in providing for His servant then and there in the time of famine, than He is in commanding the needful provision here and now, it may be in a time of plenty, and by means of very ordinary circumstances.

We cannot read of the needs of God's people in Scripture, if our eyes have been opened to see, without reading of the way in which God supplied them. Sometimes those needs were very apparent and were even allowed occasionally to become urgent before they were met. But God in giving a record of the trials of His saints does not leave us without an account of their deliverances. Thus the generations of His children that follow are able to say, as they study the record:

"Our fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them." Psalm 22:4.

The Word of God is rich in its faithful record of various kinds of temporal deliverances, and not a few of these are celebrated in thankful songs of praise.

Further, these deliverances are by no means written for the sake of those for whom those deliverances were wrought, but for all those who in time to come should read or be instructed by these divinely inspired records, and thereby encouraged to put their trust in God. For God is not retired to the heavens, having left the world to itself, or His people to themselves in the days in which we live. It must strike an unbeliever as somewhat singular to hear a Christian singing heartily about the salvation of his soul, and yet soon afterward to discern in his anxious, careworn appearance, and perhaps in his speech too, a lack of confidence in God about the living present. It is not according to Scripture that such matters as God's care for the soul, and God's present care for the body, should be divorced in that way.

"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8:32. "Who giveth" (not "gave") "us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).

God is present with His children for many purposes; but not only so, for the Apostle was able to tell heathen men - applying the words both to heathen and Christian - "Though He be not far from every one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:27, 28).

Take an illustration of the way in which God is near His people to protect them: "There came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Sela-hammahlekoth" (that is, the rock of divisions or escape). "And David went up from thence." 1 Sam. 23:27-29.

Saul was pressing David very close. It seemed as if Saul had captured his long pursued quarry on this occasion-"Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them" (v. 26).

But suddenly a messenger appeared, saying to Saul, "Haste thee, and come." Saul was called away, and thus one of the spots of David's greatest danger became henceforth a monumental place of divine deliverance; for in all this the believer sees God's intervention in David's escape. Are there not places in our own experience over which we too might write as truly as these Hebrews did, the long and difficult word, "Sela hammahlekoth"?

God was no more David's deliverer than He is the deliverer in these days of those who put their trust in Him. Let us not forget the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Again, God is present with His people to provide for them. We read of the disciples of Jesus on one occasion that, "They reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, He said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?" Matt. 16:7-9.

Jesus had wrought two miracles, in both of which He had shown how fully competent He was to satisfy the hungry with bread in places where there was none. Did He not expect these disciples to learn from these miracles that He was all-sufficient for every emergency? He is the Creator. He asks us to trust Him when we have no bread, and not to be overcome by difficulties like the one we read of here, which His disciples were unable to master. It is His will that we should "understand" and "remember" (and may divine grace accomplish this in us!) that while man thinks he can prepare a table in a land of plenty, God can prepare a "table in the wilderness."

If we have what seems like needs unmet, or difficulties unremoved, it is certainly not because God is unable to deal with these if He chooses. The Lord on this occasion said to the disciples, "O ye of little faith," and He says to us today, "Be... content with such things as ye have: for Himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee." Heb. 13:5, 6; R.V.

But God is working for His people oftentimes, not only to provide for them, to protect them, to save them out of danger, but also to prevent them from entering into danger, or temptation, and from falling into sin. Oh, may we be more ready to observe His wise direction in our daily circumstances; to see His faithful care; to heed the little warnings when we deviate from the path of His guidance, and to bless Him for all!

The Coming of Our Lord: Second Watch or Third Watch

"If He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch." Luke 12:38

Watch after watch has passed. Still, however, His word, "I come quickly," abides in all its eternal freshness and truth; and long ago the Spirit said, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand."

Rom. 13:12. How soon then He may be here!

In the first watch of the night, there were some saved ones on earth who waited for Him, and, as far as we can gather from the Spirit's record of their state, were so deeply attached to the Lord Jesus as the hope of their hearts that they were ready to open to Him immediately.

They "went forth to meet the bridegroom." This blessed hope, however, soon declined; it did not last long. Worldly associations and circumstances took hold of their hearts, and so far displaced Christ that the appalling sentence could be truthfully written, "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept"; yes, "all slumbered and slept," so that this bright and blessed hope for a long time was lost. (Matt. 25:1-5.)

The time of the second watch arrived and passed away, and the Bridegroom did not come; but "at midnight," the closing moments of the second watch, instead of our Lord coming, He sent forth an awakening cry-"At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Then our Lord's prophetic words were fulfilled, for there was a general awakening, and hearts in different parts of the earth were stirred toward Him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps." This was "at midnight," at the close of "the second watch," and we judge began about 1140] years ago. We are told it was at midnight when this cry went forth, and then it was that the third watch began. Although for many centuries the blessed hope of our Lord's coming was, speaking generally, lost, yet there was occasionally an individual who had something of the Lord's mind as to this. For example, a friend of the writer lately copied the following inscription from a monument: "Here lies, expecting the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the body of Henry Clifford, first earl of Cumberland, who died in Skipton Castle, April 22nd, 1542."

The third watch, then, according to the Jewish mode of reckoning, extended from midnight to three in the morning, when the fourth watch commenced. This was the "cockcrowing." We are therefore now some way on in the third watch.

The fourth watch goes on to the beginning of the day. In the 14th of Matthew, where we see our Lord alone in the mountain praying, and, leaving that, walking on the sea to comfort His disciples. and to bring them safely to their earthly rest and blessing (typical, as we judge, of the Jewish remnant to be brought into blessing after we are translated), it was in the fourth watch of the night. It is well also to note that, while at first they were distressed, they were soon comforted and brought safely to land; and then blessing extended to others on the earth, which we know will be the case with and through the Jewish remnant when the Deliverer comes out of Zion and turns

away ungodliness from Jacob.

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

How solemn then, as well as cheering, are the words of our Lord: "If he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so [that is, watching], blessed are those servants." May we hear His voice to us in these encouraging words, and not only wait for Him, but watch; for He said, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." Luke 12:37.

Confession

God has been perfectly satisfied, as to all the believer's sins, in the cross of Christ. On that cross a full atonement was presented for every jot and tittle of sin, in the believer's nature, and on his conscience. Hence, therefore, God does not need any further propitiation. He does not need aught to draw His heart toward the believer. We do not require to supplicate Him to be "faithful and just," when His faithfulness and justice have been so gloriously displayed, vindicated, and answered in the death of Christ. Our sins can never come into God's presence, inasmuch as Christ, who bore them all and put them away, is there instead. But if we sin, conscience will feel it, must feel it; yea, the Holy Ghost will make us feel it. He cannot allow so much as a single light thought to pass unjudged.

What then? Has our sin made its way into the presence of God? Has it found its place in the unsullied light of the inner sanctuary? God forbid! The "Advocate" is there - "Jesus Christ the righteous"-to maintain in unbroken integrity the relationship in which we stand. But though sin cannot affect God's thoughts in reference to us, it can and does affect our thoughts in reference to Him. Though it cannot make its way into God's presence, it can make its way into ours, in a most distressing and humiliating manner. Though it cannot hide the advocate from God's view, it can hide Him from ours. It gathers like a thick, dark cloud on our spiritual horizon, so that our souls cannot bask in the blessed beams of our Father's countenance. It cannot affect our relationship with God, but it can very seriously affect our enjoyment thereof.

What therefore are we to do? The Word answers: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. By confession we get our conscience cleared, the sweet sense of our relationship restored, the dark cloud dispersed, the chilling, withering influence removed, our thoughts of God set straight.

Such is the divine method, and we may truly say, that the heart that knows what it is to have ever been in the place of confession, will feel the divine power of the Apostle's words, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not" (1 John 2:1).

Current Events: World-Wide Television

The moment of the Lord Jesus' coming for His own must be very near. The rapid decline in moral standards, the increasing power of ritualism, the growth of rationalism, all remind us that the coming of the Lord draws nigh.

We know that there is to be no sign, no signal, no forewarning of that wonderful event. Yet we can see developments taking place today, which relate to the earth after the Church is gone. They bear witness to the imminence of the rapture, and they may well serve to stir us up to see that all is in readiness. "Set thine house in order" was the word of admonition to one who was about to depart this scene long ago (2 Kings 20:1). And in the 12th chapter of Luke the Lord indicates the attitude in which He would like to find us when He comes: waiting (v. 36), watching (v. 37), and doing or serving (vv. 42, 43). Blessed are those who will be thus found.

Three relatively recent developments which witness to the end of our sojourn on earth are: 1) the formation of the European Common Market; 2) development of the awful weapons of destruction; 3) perfection of world-wide television broadcasting..

The Common Market has been described as the probable forerunner of the revived Roman Empire which, Scripture tells us, will be a political power during the tribulation period. The atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb have been demonstrated with all their destructive power, and more recently the world powers have shown that they have about perfected the means of delivering these bombs, without detection, to the opposite side of the earth. We can well suppose that these implements of war will be used in the coming conflict between the nations.

World-wide television, the third foretoken, became a possibility five years ago when "Telstar," the first communication satellite, was successfully launched. Since then, other larger satellites have been placed in orbit, in relatively fixed positions 22,300 miles from the earth. At this distance the continuing movement of the device keeps pace with the speed of the earth's rotation, and the satellite appears to hover over one part of the earth. With "Early Bird," "Lani Bird," "Telstar," and the "Pacific" satellites all in successful orbit, some two-thirds of the world is now served by these whirling relay stations. The United States is not alone in this effort, for Russia too has launched several communication satellites, all larger and more powerful than those of the United States.

The significance of world-wide television broadcasting is that it will provide the means for all the world to simultaneously see the "beast" of the revived Roman Empire. Although Scripture speaks of him as a beast (or the beast), he is only a man; but he is a man of Satan's special choosing. Satan will also energize the revived Roman Empire. It will be in open and blasphemous opposition against God and all His interests, whether in heaven or on earth. The beast will be the imperial head of this political alliance. Except for the elect, all that dwell upon the earth will actually worship him (Rev. 13:8).

For many years, students of prophecy, seeing this foretold in Scripture, have wondered how the beast will be seen by the whole world simultaneously; for we are told, "The beast which thou

sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go into destruction: and they who dwell on the earth, whose names are not written from the founding of the world in the book of life, shall wonder, seeing the beast, that it was, and is not, and shall be present." Rev. 17:8; J.N.D. Trans.

The launching of Telstar was a big step in resolving this question. It provided the means whereby television signals could span oceans and continents. Despite its small size and its height above the earth, television signals directed to it from Europe were reflected downward on North America where a receiving station re-transmitted them to television stations across the land. Events taking place in Europe were then viewed in America as they were occurring.

Further' improvements and additional satellites will soon make it possible for the whole world to simultaneously observe a single televised program or event. The impact of this is indicated by the vast throng which reportedly watched the Pasadena, California Rose Parade on television. Estimates placed that audience at more than 128 million, largely in North America alone. What an audience there will be when the whole world is equipped for television. It is virtually so equipped already. This is surely an indication that the coming of the Lord is very near.

With intercontinental television, it has been said by another, "The whole world will see the fulmination of wickedness as the beast struts across the scene, blaspheming God and making the world tremble. Satan will be behind the beast, supporting him with all his power. The world populace will worship not only the beast, but also the apostate head of the Jewish state in Jerusalem (the antichrist) and Satan himself." These three--the beast, the antichrist, and Satan--will be a trinity of wickedness opposed to God's King, whom He has destined to "rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Rev. 12:5).

About 20 years ago, television was a novelty; but it very quickly took hold as an entertainment medium. Some useful applications have been developed in both industry and in education, but by far the greatest use is in the home. A recent survey showed that 94 percent of the homes in the United States have at least one set. In addition to private homes, it is found in almost every hotel and motel room and in most hospital rooms. Young people, serving as "baby-sitters," often find it available in the homes where they care for children. Anyone then may even involuntarily be brought into contact with television.

If the question arises as to owning or operating a television set, we entreat believers to keep in mind Psalm 119:37: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." The fact that such a great percentage of people around us own television sets is no warrant for a Christian to have one. For one thing, the great bulk of television programs are of no possible value to a Christian, and many are positively harmful. People connected with the broadcasting industry themselves deplore at least part of the material which is telecast. Lee DeForest, the scientist who pioneered the development of television, has publicly lamented that his invention has been used for such wasteful and even harmful effects.

An officer of the Columbia Broadcasting System has said that television is a "dream machine." "People," he said, "use television to escape from the pressures of their jobs, and their marriages, problems with their children, their health and related anxieties.... By and large, they don't want to be intellectually stimulated and they don't want to be educated. They want to bury their problems

in the television screen." Our comment on this is in the words of Jas. 3:10: "My brethren, these things ought not so to be," as relates to the children of God.

A newspaper writer recently reported that during the present season motion pictures which had been shown in theaters to adult audiences only, because they were not suitable for young people and children, will now be broadcast on television. One of these films is said to be packed with profanity and containing some of the most vulgar things heard from a sound track. Another picture scheduled for showing over the air is characterized by the New York Times as "demeaning the prestige of the human race." Will anyone dare say that Satan is right behind all this? No intelligent Christian would go to a theater to view such things, but now they can be seen privately at home via television. Beloved fellow-Christian, we urge you to not allow such to enter your home.

The danger we have pointed to in television is also present in a variety of magazines and books, as well as in moving pictures. Lurid novels seem to be almost the order of the day for publishers of fiction; and many magazines feature, in varying degree, material which appeals to the lust of the flesh.

May we then be alert to the danger in all of these things. Not everything is evil that appears in newspapers, magazines, and books; but careless use of them can result in the drawing away of one's heart from Christ and to the world. Many of us know how hard it is to erase from the mind a scene or action depicted on the printed page. What is seen on television or the movie screen makes an even deeper imprint on the mind. For this reason we again sound a faithful word of warning to all Christians to beware of the defiling influences all around us, and especially in the things of which we have written.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection [mind, as it should read] 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. This is a seasonable word, and we do well to weigh it, together with the succeeding verses.

Many believe that there are Christians on earth today who will be among those "which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." It is a great privilege to be one of these, but it carries a responsibility. Although we are in the world, we are not of it, nor should we act as though we are of it. Col. 3:4, quoted above, refers to the day of the Lord's manifestation, and we know that we shall be manifested with Him. In view of that event we are told to mortify-put to death -our members which are upon the earth. While we await the shout that will call us away from the earth, let us conduct ourselves in a manner befitting our high calling. "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [or, conduct]." 1 Pet. 1:15. W. L. G.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,

Look full in His wonderful face.

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,

In the light of His glory and grace."

Death Worketh in Us, but Life in You

In bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, Paul found death to self, and the result was life to the Corinthians. Paul held the power of Christ's death on the natural man, so that when he ministered among the Corinthians there was no Paul at all, but only Christ. It was life to them because death was working in Paul.

Decision

Indecision is a great hindrance in the Christian path. As long as a man does not consider responsibilities of the question before God, Am I for this world or for that? Satan will amuse him with something or other here, while the Spirit of God alone will satisfy him if he desires to go on in faith.

No doubt all Christians say, "Christ for my sins"; but you cannot say you have Christ for the path, apart from the ministry of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, I do not doubt, has come down not only to conduct the bride, the Church, across the desert to Christ, but also to satisfy and fill her heart all along that path. This is foreshadowed for us in Gen. 24, where we see that the servant comes into Mesopotamia to guide Rebekah through the desert to Isaac. But an important question has to be answered before there can be any start along the path, and it is this that I will consider a little.

Evidently Rebekah might have got a very clear understanding of the grace that had chosen her, and might have spoken of it too, without taking the path which led her on to him whose heart she was called to know, and whose wealth she was called to share. She might have said to any acquaintance, "Have you heard about it? I am the recipient of wonderful tidings from Canaan. Isaac is the heir to all Abraham's wealth, and I am selected to be his bride." All this she might have said without showing by her actions in everyday life that (as much as in her lay) she was making this news her own in practical reality. It cannot, I think, be disputed that a soul might say, "I belong to Christ, and some day I am going to heaven," and yet not be taking daily steps in that direction, as seen in their life here. There would be little proof in some that Christ and heaven are the objects of their daily course, had we not the assurance that it is so from their own lips!

Lips without life will not suit Abraham's servant, nor will it suit the Holy Spirit. He is here with one definite object, and whether that object is accomplished in you and in me or not, He will not tarry here. He will commence His journey at once, for He must return to His Master. He is here in grace, in the world as it is, but not to sanction it, and surely not to rest in it. No, neither of these; but He is here to lead out of it.

The crucial question is the one that was asked when, in solemn conclave, Rebekah was assembled together with her relatives, in the presence of this Canaanite stranger. This is the question then for each of us to face today. It cannot be avoided by anyone calling himself a Christian. "Wilt thou go with this man?" Will you begin your journey this day in the company of the Spirit of God? Remember, you must be chosen first, and know it, and then the journey only begins if we have affirmatively answered this question. There are many souls around us who will doubtless spend their future eternity with the Lord, who are not spending their present time in the enjoyment of the communion of the Holy Ghost. They are undecided about this question.

"Peradventure," says the servant, when on the eve of undertaking his all-important mission, "the woman will not be willing to follow me"! O my reader, is this your case?

It is, I doubt not, the case of thousands of people who will be in heaven. I do not say that they are not converted. It is no question of their conversion. No; but they will not "go with" the ministry and leading of the Holy Spirit, and will not allow the home of Mesopotamia with its attractions to give place to the desert sands and those untrodden paths, known only to the Canaanite stranger, the Spirit of God! To be under the guidance of the Spirit, and no other, is manifestly to have begun the journey.

O my reader, has this solemn meeting of which I speak ever been held in the history of your soul? You are a Christian, and you know well where and what the terminus of that is. But it is not of the terminus that we speak at this time. What is the thesis - the question? It is of the company or path that leads to the terminus. Better this meeting should be held at once. Let us weigh all that can be said. Call in your business, your friends, your prospects, your pleasures - all that you have ever counted on and lived for in this world. Let us hear what each has to plead, in order that you should not undertake this journey. Then let us hear what the heavenly Stranger has to say to us about Him whose Messenger He is, so that this question being fairly argued out, your soul may go forth from this moment, and from this solemn meeting, unshackled and unimpeded, to commence its heavenward journey in the company of the Spirit of God!

Now note that His business is urgent. You cannot afford to say, Well, I will think about this matter; I require a little time for consideration. You surely want rest here on earth - rest of soul, and this question decided; in the company and by the means of the ministry of the Spirit, you shall get it. Do not be content to say, There is rest only in heaven. Christ spoke of our finding rest on earth. He says, "Take My yoke upon you, ... and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Many a one finds true rest in heaven, w h o nevertheless had no rest on earth, because of not going with this Man (v. 58).

"I will go." This is the only right answer from the chosen bride. Remember the Lord says, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." We are chosen by Him. Have we one and all responded (the matter being fairly argued out), "I will go"? We are all poor failing beings, but in all honesty of purpose are we going "with this man"? Are our hearts set only upon this? And if they are, then all along our course in this world we shall find for our comfort that this reply will come up again and again. Amid the responsibilities of the household, as well as in the assembly, the house of God, "I will go" will meet every difficulty which arises. I have His company through the waste, and He has only one Object to speak to me of - the One to whom I belong, and for whom He will of necessity care for me, all along the desert path. I am to share and know all that is the portion of the only Son.

What are all your surroundings worth, my reader, that there should be with you, or indeed with any of us, one moment's hesitation about going "with this man"? We hear the question, "Wilt thou go?" It is good to weigh the value of things in the light that God casts upon them. Are you distressed in spirit, cast about, as it were, by the tumultuous sea of this world? Ah! Why is it? Have you honestly faced the question which I have here feebly tried to put before you? and have you answered it? To be really happy you must be consciously in the company of Him of whom Abraham's servant was only a type; and it is only therein that you will be happy. He who wants both heaven and earth, enjoys neither the one nor the other.

"I will go." May this language be truly the utterance of all our hearts. We shall not then need to tell people that we are going to heaven. They will see it. As these desert days come and go one after the other, there will always be a full supply for each, and no looking back. Farther each day from

Mesopotamia. But you must make a beginning. It is not conversion, as I have said. Do not be content to think that if you are converted you have said, "I will go."

It is a great mistake. But if you have said it once, you will by grace be continually saying it. I go forth today, a day that I have never lived in this desert before, a day the intricacies of which I have no knowledge at all; but by grace "I will go" with this man, and He will suffice me (see John 4:14; 7:38). The Spirit is leading the bride through the desert to Christ. Will He allow her to famish? No, He will not.

We are privileged to weigh the things of time against those of eternity, and this is done always when we "go with this man." It is then we learn how things look in the light of God (2 Cor. 4:17, 18). May the response of the ways, as well as those of the lips, be seen in us, seen and read of all men. "Wilt thou go with this man?... I WILL GO." Amen.

The Dew of Hermon

Psalm 133

The expression at the head of this paper has, it seems, long proved "a geographical puzzle" to some. But to one who has the mind of Christ it is no puzzle, but a most striking and beautiful figure. Hermon is the very loftiest peak in all the land of Palestine, and from its snowy cap, when all the surrounding country is parched, the refreshing dew descends upon the mountains of Zion; and this is one of the figures used by the Holy Ghost to illustrate the beauty and pleasantness of brethren dwelling together in unity.

Let us quote the entire Psalm:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon... that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

Here we have two lovely illustrations of unity among brethren. It is like ointment descending from the head of the high priest to the skirts of his garments; it is like the dew descending in refreshing power from Hermon's snowy top.

How truly delightful! And yet they are but figures used to set forth the divine idea of unity among brethren. But how is the unity to be promoted? By living sufficiently near to our great priestly Head to catch the fragrant ointment as it descends from Him - to be living so near the Man in the glory as that the refreshing dew of His grace may drop upon our souls, thus rendering us fragrant and fruitful to His praise.

This is the way to dwell in unity with our brethren. It is one thing to talk about unity, and another thing altogether to dwell in it. We may profess to hold "the unity of the body" and "the unity of the Spirit" - most precious and glorious truths surely - and all the while be really full of selfish strife, party spirit, and sectarian feeling, all of which are entirely destructive of practical unity. If brethren are to dwell together in unity, they must be receiving the ointment from the Head, the refreshing showers from the true Hermon. They must live in the very presence of Christ, so that all their points and angles may be molded off, all their selfishness judged and subdued, all their own peculiar notions set aside, all their cues and crotchets flung to the winds. Thus there will be largeness of heart, breadth of mind, and depth of sympathy. Thus we shall learn to bear and forbear. It will not then be loving those who think with us as to some pet theory or other. It will be loving and embracing "all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

The blessed Head loves all His members, and if we are drinking into His Spirit, if we are learning of Him, we shall love all likewise. No doubt, those who keep His commandments enjoy His special love - the love of complacency - and so we cannot but specially love those in whom we trace most of His blessed Spirit. But this is a totally different thing from loving people because they adopt our

line of truth, or our peculiar views. It is Christ, and not self; and this is what we want, if we are to "dwell together in unity."

Look at the charming picture presented in Philippians 2. There truly we see, first of all, the divine Head Himself, and from Him the ointment descending to the skirts of His garments. Where did Paul get the grace to enable him to be ready to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice of his brethren? What was it that made Timothy care for other people? What led Epaphroditus to put his life in his hand to supply his brother's lack? What is the one grand answer to all these questions? Simply this: these beloved servants of Christ lived so in their Master's presence and drank so deeply into His Spirit, they dwelt so near the Man in the glory, that the fragrant ointment and the refreshing dew fell upon their souls abundantly and made them channels of blessing to others.

This, beloved Christian reader, be assured of is the grand secret of getting on together. If brethren are to dwell together in unity, they must have the "ointment" and the "dew" dropping continually upon them. They must live close to Christ and be occupied with Him, so that they may show forth His virtues, and reflect His blessed image.

And then what joy to be enabled in any little measure to refresh the heart of God! He delights to see His children walking in love. It is He who says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Surely this ought to stir our hearts to seek in every possible way to promote this lovely unity. It should lead us to sink self and all its belongings, to surrender everything that might tend in any measure to alienate our hearts from one another. The Holy Ghost exhorts us to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Let us remember this. It is the unity of the Spirit, not the unity of the body, we are to keep in the uniting bond of peace. This will cost us something. The word "endeavoring" shows that it cannot be done without sacrifice. But the One who so graciously exhorts us to service will ever supply the needed grace. The ointment and the dew will flow down from Him in refreshing power, knitting our hearts together in holy love, and enabling us to deny ourselves, and surrender everything which might tend to hinder that true unity which we are imperatively called on to maintain.

Divine Love: the Activity

"Jesus of Nazareth... who went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

There is nothing negative about this verse; it does not say, "who did no harm." There was One who, in His pathway through this world of misery and need, was actively engaged in doing good. His love was unwearied and, in spite of rebuffs and even hatred, He "went about doing good." The ungrateful response of those to whom He came is told in the words of the Psalm:

"For My love they are My adversaries.... They have rewarded Me evil for good, and hatred for My love." Psalm 109:4, 5.

Still that blessed One went steadily forward "doing good," and at last we read of Him weeping over (not the fact that He was rejected, but) those of that guilty city, because of the terrible judgments that were soon to fall on them (Luke 19:41-44).

May we, His redeemed ones, who are left in this same world a little longer, be better transcripts of the One to whom we belong - that One who "went about doing good." The needs are great and the "night is far spent." A few verses from the epistles may remind us of our opportunities and privileges:

"Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,... for we ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived... but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:1-5).

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Gal. 6:10.

We must not, however, disregard any direct word or any principle of Scripture in doing good. Here we need to keep a balance and remember that we must "strive lawfully." Our enemy is very subtle and would entangle us with associations and unequal yokes in our seeking to do good. But, fellow-Christian, if we are really seeking to "redeem the time" (it is fast going), and look to Him for His guidance, we shall find abundant opportunities. Then, shall we not as "royal priests" dispense royal bounty and "show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9)?

Do We Raise Our Ebenezers?

It is important for us to consider and apprehend how prayer is used in times of difficulty, and we see it strikingly set forth in the case of Samuel. He is himself the gift of prayer, as his name declares (heard of God), and in his service toward Israel he uses prayer above any of his predecessors; in fact he introduces and proves to us the power of prayer. Other servants of God were distinguished for works of another kind - Samuel, peculiarly for prayer. Great works had been wrought by devoted servants in the times of the Judges, but now the failure of Israel is so deep that all service that made something of man is set aside. What God can be and what He can do for them when called on is now declared and shown forth through Samuel, whose power and the secret of whose success in his service, is prayer. Hence His example is one of great encouragement to us at the present time.

In 1 Samuel 7 we find an instance of deliverance and succor accorded in answer to prayer, and the spirit of true dependence in a moment of greatest difficulty.

"Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering [Christ the ground of our acceptance] the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel : but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them ; and they were smitten before Israel. . . . Then Samuel took a stone, and set it up between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us."

When we have received mercy of the Lord, it is most important that we should own it. We may pray and receive, but the moment which perpetuates the mercy is not the mercy itself, but the Ebenezer - the acknowledgment of the heart of how God has helped and succored us. The mercy conferred was great - a day ever to be remembered by Israel - but it is not the thing done, or even the marvelous way in which the thing was done, that is the monument of it; but more, it is the testimony of the heart to the unfailing help of God - the Ebenezer, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us." I know and own Him as my Helper hitherto ; the mercy may remain or it may pass away; the Ebenezer ever remains ; I have not only received, but I know the One from whom I have received. I have a fixed judgment about Him, and my heart records it. This is the real strength of the heart - and its Ebenezer. It is distinct and positive to me that it is His hand that has wrought.

I believe that souls lose immensely by not being able to record more distinctly that hitherto He has helped them. It is the experimental knowledge of God which is acquired by true dependence on Him. When we have true confidence in Him because of what He is and what He has been to us, we are enabled to go forward in spite of all difficulties, and then we have no self-confidence. Our tendency is not to have full confidence in Him and, though we have prayed, to have few Ebenezers - few monuments-fixed judgments in our hearts of the power and succor of Christ; and then we seek for confidence in ourselves, which easy circumstances tend to feed. One prays largely and fully in proportion as one has confidence in God ; and if I really know Him as my Helper, if I have a sure Ebenezer, I can easily and simply look to Him. The great principle of prayer

is that I know the One whom I am addressing, and I am reckoning on His help.

In the church of Philadelphia (Rev. 3) there is both the sense of the need of help and the knowledge of the gain of it, whereas the state in Laodicea is a "need of nothing" - no sense of the use of help, for there is no sense of needing it.

We ought to regard prayer as the prelude to blessing, and thus be able to raise our Ebenezers. I know what God is, and how He has helped me hitherto; and I am expecting and reckoning on His help. We have not merely to own our weakness and need; that is the first thing, but we have to expect help and succor.

Prayer is a mighty engine through which the resources of God are made available to us. It is as the needy one, not as the self-satisfied and self-confident one, that I avail myself of it; and as I exercise my heart in my Ebenezers as touching what He has been to me, the more am I encouraged to go on in faith, and to "continue in prayer, ... with thanksgiving."

Eshcol: His Word

I have never felt fully at ease with two lines of a favorite hymn-

"Though the shore we hope to land on

Only by report is known";

for in my secret thoughts, while that has been singing, I have said, We have something beside a report of that land. I grant that if we had nothing but God's report, that would be quite enough to commend our souls into that state which the hymn goes on to describe-

"Yet we freely all abandon,

Led by that report alone."

I fully grant, that if the Lord had been pleased to give us only His word about the goodness of the land, that would be quite enough to claim our faith. But the question is, Has He confined it to a report of that land? Is it only tidings? This I question. Eliezer, for instance, gave to Rebecca more than a report-jewels and gold, pledges of Isaac's love, and samples of Abraham's wealth. And this is the office of the Holy Ghost in the great economy of redemption. He enters the scene, not so much with the report of the distant glory, as with pledges and first fruits of it; He is the earnest of the inheritance. So with the spies and their clusters (Num. 13); they did this additional service for the camp. The report of Canaan had reached them through Moses, long before this, and the spies also bore a report of it; they said, that surely it was a good land, flowing with milk and honey; but they did more, something which Moses their redeemer from Egypt had never done; they presented a cluster of grapes, and said, This is the fruit of it. They offered a sample, a first fruits. This was a new thing; this seeing of the produce of Canaan was something additional to all that had hitherto been done for them. Moses described the land, the spies exhibited and brought into the wilderness a taste of its pleasant produce, and this Eshcol, like the jewels of Eliezer, typifies the blessed service of the Spirit in the great work of our salvation; and this is God's way, as appears by these witnesses. He gives an earnest, as well as a report. He did so in patriarchal days by His messenger from Abraham's house; He did so in Israel's days by the spies which He commanded to search the promised land (Numb. 13:3), while His people were still in the wilderness; and He does so in this age of ours, among His elect, by the gospel and indwelling of His Spirit, who gives the soul enjoyment of the things reported of in the Word, after the manner of a sample or foretaste. It is a part of the divine plan of the great economy, or purpose, to give earnest, as well as reports. This is essential, and not accidental.

The First Thing in the Day

Our first pursuits in the morning generally indicate where our hearts are. The children of Israel had to gather their daily food before sunrise, or they would be too late; and if the believer can rise from his bed and go about the business of this life before he has looked up to the Lord, and turned to the Scriptures which testify of Him, for the renewal of the inward man, it is more than probable that his heart has got away from God. Nothing can possibly make up for a lack of food, for "Christ is all"; and those who really live upon Him can say.

"Nothing but Christ, as on we tread,
The Gift unpriced-God's living Bread-
With staff in hand, and feet well shod,
Nothing but Christ, the Christ of God."

Fragment

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends." John 15:15.

A Christian lady visited a blind girl whom she had taught to read the Bible in raised letters. She said: "I went into her room one morning, and before I had time to reach her hand and let her know that someone was present, I found her speaking to the Lord about a verse she had just spelled out-'Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' Lifting her sightless eyes to Him she said, 'Oh, I like to hear Thee say that! I ONLY knew before that You were my Friend, the sinner's Friend-I did not know that we were friends of Yours!' "

T. M. O.

"A friend of Jesus! Oh, what bliss, that one so vile as I

Should ever have a Friend like this to lead me to the sky;

A Friend when other friendships cease, a Friend when others fail,

A Friend who gives me joy and peace, a Friend who will prevail."

A Fruitful Bough by a Well

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 in Genesis 49:22 we discover 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 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 (Gen. 49:23, 24), as is shown by the deliverance He wrought that day for this poor captive of Satan.

Giving up, or Pouring in?

I said to one today, "If I could but be a consistent member of the bride, the Lamb's wife, of the chaste virgin espoused to the Lord, how simple and bright all would be! If I could be simple as a little child of God placed near Christ, the first-born among many brethren, how bright all would be!" The answer was, "But what devotedness that supposes!" I replied, "Not what men call or mean by devotedness; they mean by devotedness, having a great deal to give up. I am part of that virgin - a child in the family of God - but I look up for the heart and mind of the Bridegroom, and all His love and grace, to be mine; I look up for Abba's love to free His child's heart. Will Christ's love, filling my heart and mind - will Abba's love, filling me to overflowing - be my giving up or His pouring in?"

God's Goodness

"Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee." Psalm 31:19.

We once said to a dear woman in Jamaica, much tried in her circumstances, "God is better to us than our fears." She answered with a quick smile, "Yes, and God is better to us than our faith." I confess that I stood rebuked, and felt I was in the presence of one taught in the school of God. I looked on that woman as a triumph of Christianity, as a complete answer to the first question raised in the Bible, a question doubting God's goodness and love - "Yea, hath God said?" The object of Satan was achieved when he instilled doubt into man's heart at the fall. God's triumph over Satan is proclaimed when a weak saint is found triumphing in afflictions, praising Him for trials, rejoicing in tribulation.

"He was better to me than all my hopes,

He was better than all my fears;

He made a bridge of my broken works,

And a rainbow of my tears."

The Good Hand of the Lord

"There was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron."

It was really, as we would say, against the infinite grace of our Lord Jesus. This is what answers to it in the antitype. This might seem strong to say of Christians; but whenever we are tried and occupied with circumstances, are we not doing so? Do you think the Lord does not know what troubles us? Do you think the Lord does not send it for our good? It may be bad in another; but the chief point we have to look at is to see the good hand of the Lord, no matter what it is. We are not to be "overcome of evil," but to "overcome evil with good." The true way to do so is to count on the Lord Jesus regulating everything. All power is given to Him on earth and in heaven; and why should we not be happy in His ways with us? He it is who deals with us, whatever may be the instrument and whatever the circumstances

God's Gospel, Son, Wrath, Power, Righteousness

What majesty! what wonders! All is of God, and we stand in awe as we contemplate the greatness of all that is His as revealed in the first chapter of Romans.

We are all familiar with the word "gospel"; it means "good news." Here then we meet with some good news that is described as being God's. Could any news be greater or better than that belonging to and originating with God Himself? Surely not. The gospel had been preached boldly after the resurrection of Christ, as recorded in The Acts, but nowhere do we find it so fully explained as in the epistle to the Romans. How fitting then that this epistle should be placed first among all the epistles, for it expounds in beautiful order God's gospel.

From the outset we are brought consciously to the thought of having to do with God—a God that has good news. From the rich and unfathomable depths of Himself comes forth the fountain called His gospel, and so it is, and must be, worthy of its blessed Source. And while man's deep and dire need of the gospel is not mentioned first, it is self-evident that God's good news must be for some persons who are in need of it. A man of great wealth would not consider news that he had been given a trifling sum, as particularly good. News, to be truly good, must be suited to the need and urgency of the person's state. We see what ruin the whole human race is in because of sin, and we believe that the great God could devise a plan suited to the need; the news of such a plan would surely be good, for it would bring hope and deliverance to the wretched and lost.

This wondrous gospel of God has been promised in the Old Testament through the prophets, but it could not be proclaimed until the work on which it was based was accomplished.

If God is the source of the gospel, God's Son is the means by which it was accomplished; therefore the "gospel of God" is "concerning His Son." We naturally think of the gospel as it meets our need, but we must not forget that it originated in the heart of God, nor should we overlook that it concerns His Son. If it comes forth from God and is worthy of Him, it must also begin at God, and we should view it first as it concerns Him. Before man's need is mentioned, we learn that God's interest in His gospel centers in His Son who alone could lay the foundation for the gospel; He alone could glorify God about sin, so that God could announce His glad tidings. God is interested in the gospel first because it centers in and around His dear Son. All that concerns God's Son is precious to His heart. It reminds us of the parable of the marriage of the king's son (Matt. 22). The guests that partook of that marriage feast were happy, but the king was primarily occupied with the happiness of his son.

God's Son came into this world according to all the promises and prophecies, and so these early verses of Romans 1 connect with the Old Testament. The Son of God He was, but He came as the Son of David to fulfill the promises—He became a man—nevertheless He was declared to be the Son of God, and that by His victory over all the power of death—by resurrection. And those who had faith to discern could see that Spirit of holiness all through His life—the same Spirit by whom was the power in resurrection.

This gospel then concerns God's Son, but it is announced for the obedience of faith among all nations. Not that all nations are to be saved through it, but it is set forth to be received in faith among all nations. It is not restricted to the Jews; no race or tongue can lay sole claim to God's gospel. It comes for men wherever they are, for all have sinned and all need it; however, it is not for mere intellectual knowledge, but for faith obedience. Wherever it is thus received it bows the heart before God in true contrition and acknowledges Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Then in verse 16 the Apostle says he is not ashamed of that wondrous gospel, for he knows what it is-the power of God unto salvation. Knowing something of its source, its means, its scope, its power, the Apostle is not ashamed of it nor of his mission, but rather glories in it as something of inestimable value. What could be more powerful than something described as the "power of God"? Nothing! And nothing short of this very power could have met the need of fallen man. Lower he could not have fallen, and nothing short of God's power could lift him out of such depths. As Hannah prophetically spoke in 1 Samuel 2, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill... to make them inherit the throne of glory." Nothing short of this "lift" would accomplish what the sinner required, and none less than God could do it. The epistle to the Romans later goes on to show how God could do such a thing righteously - this, Hannah's song did not enter into. Man was utterly powerless-"without strength"-and so all must be done for him by another. Mephibosheth being "fetched" by David from the place of "no pasture" (Lodebar) when he was lame on both his feet, and being brought by another to the king's table, is but a very feeble illustration of what the power of God does for the sinner. This power is His gospel, and it reaches down to the lowest depths for the vile sinner, and will not stop until he is safely seated in the glory, with and like Christ. Oh, what a power the power of God is! and it is "unto salvation," which here involves the complete salvation-when "we shall be like Him." And if the gospel is for some among all nations, it is only received by faith: "to everyone that believeth." Knowing about God's gospel is not enough; one must appropriate it to himself by faith-he must accept it as from God for himself as though he were the only sinner.

Now this gospel which is the display of God's power is that which reveals His righteousness. Man had no righteousness for God, but God's gospel brings out His righteousness for man. Fallen man might labor hard and long to produce a righteousness for God, but he could not begin to accomplish so great a thing; therefore, the glorious news of God's righteousness must sound a wondrous note in the ears of him who has none.

Christ went into death for us, and there on the cross He fully glorified God about the question of sin; now God is righteous in raising Him from the dead and seating Him on His own right hand in heaven. And God does not stop there, but places the believer in Christ in the same place; he is seated in Him in heavenly places. God is righteous in placing that redeemed sinner in the glory with Christ. God's gospel then reveals God's righteousness, not only in glorifying Christ, but in lifting up the believer in Him to the same heights-it is due to Christ that it should be so. And God accounts the sinner who believes righteous, and he is made the righteousness of God in Him, and Christ Himself is the believer's righteousness.

All this: God's gospel concerning His Son, God's power, and God's righteousness are in sharp contrast to all that went before. Israel was under the law of God, but that was not the gospel; it certainly was not "good news." It said that the man that did not do the things it required should die.

In Exodus 32 the law written on the tables of stone was described as the "writing of God," and the tables as the "work of God," but certainly it was not the "gospel of God." And the law did not give a man power, nor could it be said to be the power of God. It only condemned the guilty, and everyone that came under the law was verily proved to be guilty. Even Saul of Tarsus (later known as the Apostle Paul) who was outwardly an upright Jew, found the law brought out what was in his evil heart. He found that the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," only provoked his desires to have, and so condemned him. The law was not power, nor did it bring power, except to condemn.

And the law did not bring in God's righteousness. None ever kept the law, and so there was not even human righteousness. If man had kept the law and obtained a righteousness, it would have been his own righteousness, not God's. Therefore, when it was proved that man did not and could not have a righteousness of his own, God brought out His in the gospel.

But there is another word in Romans 1 that we must not forget-God's wrath revealed from heaven (v. 18). This is not exactly in the gospel, but going along with it. If the gospel brought out what was in the heart of God, and what was accomplished by His Son, then along with it there came the revelation of the wrath of God. This had not been disclosed in the Old Testament, but now those that neglect or despise God's salvation through His gospel must know that He has wrath for the sinner who will not have Christ. In previous times God had punished certain cities and certain peoples for their iniquities, but in Romans 1 we have read of wrath being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. How solemn! how terrible! this wrath of God must be. Well may the Apostle say to the Corinthians, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men." If God's gospel is glorious, His power infinite, His righteousness perfect and intrinsic, what must His wrath be! Well may we say to the sinner today, "Flee from the wrath to come," while we know the Lord Jesus as our deliverer from the coming wrath (1 Thess. 1:10).

Have Faith in God

How prone we are, in moments of pressure and difficulty, to turn the eye to some creature resource! Our hearts are full of creature confidence, human hopes, and earthly expectations. We know comparatively little of the deep blessedness of simply looking to God. We are ready to look anywhere and everywhere rather than to Him. We turn to any broken cistern and lean on any broken reed, although we have an exhaustless Fountain and Rock of Ages ever near.

And yet we have proved times without number that "creature streams are dry." Man is sure to disappoint us when we look to him. "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Isa. 2:22. And again, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited." Jer. 17:5, 6.

Such is the sad result of leaning on the creature-barrenness, desolation, disappointment - like the heath in the desert. No refreshing showers - no dew from heaven - no good - nothing but drought and sterility. How can it be otherwise when the heart is turned away from the Lord, the only source of blessing? It lies not within the range of the creature to satisfy the heart. God alone can do this. He can meet our every need and satisfy our every desire. He never fails a trusting heart.

But He must be trusted in reality. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say" he trusts God, if he really does not do so? A sham faith will not do. It will not do to trust in word, neither in tongue. It must be in deed and in truth. Of what use is a faith with one eye on the Creator, and another on the creature? Can God and the creature occupy the same platform? Impossible. It must be God - or what? The creature and the curse that ever follows creature confidence.

Mark the contrast. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Jer. 17:7, 8.

How blessed! How bright! How beautiful! Who would not put his trust in such a God? How delightful to find oneself wholly and absolutely cast upon Him! To be shut up to Him. To have Him filling the entire range of the soul's vision. To find all our springs in Him. To be able to say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved." Psalm 62:5, 6.

Note the little word "only." It is very searching. It will not do to say we are trusting in God, while the eye is all the while askance upon the creature. It is much to be feared that we frequently talk about looking to the Lord, while in reality we are expecting our fellow man to help us. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jer. 17:9, 10.

How needful to have the heart's deepest motive springs judged in the presence of God! We are so apt to deceive ourselves by the use of certain phrases which, so far as we are concerned, have no force, no value, no truth whatever. The language of faith is on our lips, but the heart is full of creature confidence. We talk to men about our faith in God, in order that they may help us out of our difficulties.

Let us be honest. Let us walk in the clear light of God's presence, where everything is seen as it really is. Let us not rob God of His glory, and our own souls of abundant blessing, by an empty profession of dependence on Him, while the heart is secretly going out after some creature stream. Let us not miss the deep joy, peace and blessing, the strength, stability and victory, that faith ever finds in the living God, in the living Christ of God, and in the living Word of God. Oh! let us "Have faith in God."

He Restoreth My Soul

Mr. Fred Arnot was once asked what he considered the greatest thing that God had done for him in Africa. The one who asked expected to hear some story of a great deliverance from a lion or some such animal. The answer was, "He restored my soul." Many can testify today in every land to the truth of these words in their own experience. If we have failed and gotten out of communion, God is waiting to do this great thing for us also; shall we let Him?

"Still sweet 'tis to discover,
If clouds have dimmed my sight,
When passed, Eternal Lover,
Toward me, as e'er, Thou'rt bright."

The Heavenly Calling: Walk Worthy of the Heavenly Calling

The Epistle to the Ephesians, after blessedly unfolding the mystery of the Church, continues: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, It sets us in heavenly places in beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Eph. 4:1. Law made standing to depend on walk. Grace makes walk to depend on standing. Christ, and then urges a walk worthy of the position. This is God's present way, as remote from legalism on the one hand as from antinomianism on the other....

The walk of the individual Christian then must be suited to his calling in Christ. As a member of His body, he must behave consistently. If the body is not of the world, he is not of the world; if the body is heavenly, he is heavenly. As the whole body should manifest its true character, so should each member. Now the Church is separate from the world, united with Christ in heaven, incorporated with Christ and indwelt by the Spirit. If then the believer is to walk worthy of his vocation, such is the character which he is to exhibit in the world.

Looking at the matter from this point of view, what is the walk which would befit a Christian? Having a heavenly calling, how could he mix himself with the pleasures, the politics, the vanities, and the ambitions of the world? The ball, the theater, the concert, would be avoided, not because natural conscience condemned them, but as inconsistent with the believer's vocation. Are such scenes, he would ask, suited for one who is associated with Christ in death and resurrection, who belongs to heaven, and is awaiting the return of the Savior to take him there? How can I enjoy the pleasures and frivolities of a world from which I am severed by my heavenly calling -a world which hates my heavenly Head and contemns my heavenly hope--a world which is rushing on at express rate to the fearful judgments that precede the day of the Lord? Would the honors, the applause, or the high places of such a doomed world attract his heart? Would he not say like Daniel as he saw the judgment of Babylon traced by God's finger on the wall, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king and make known to him the interpretation"?

What would have Belshazzar and his lords have thought of Daniel's interpretation if they had seen him clutching at power and place in the city whose overthrow he had foretold? And what can the world think as it sees believers grasping at the empty distinctions of a scene on which the shadow of approaching judgment already rests? Surely it is for those who can read the handwriting to be solemnly warning the world instead of chasing its fleeting honors or bidding for its worthless applause.

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Hidden Treasures

"In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. 2:3.

Hidden things are not in plain sight. We must search for them-delve into secret recesses, and often dig deeply.

Then let us search the Scriptures-not satisfied with a mere surface reading, but seeking, with the Spirit's guidance, the rich and manifold treasures that are hidden in Christ and His precious Word.

High or Low Tide

When the soul is down, like a ship when the tide is low, it is in danger of shoals and sandbanks; but when the tide is up, there are no sandbanks, because the ship is lifted up above them all. Thus when the soul is happy in Christ, it will go on peacefully, independent of all the trials we may be called to meet with in our fellow saints.... And thus going on in the tide of divine goodness, forgetting everything else, we can walk happily together, being occupied with Christ; and not with each other.

Him That Is Able

to do all that we ask

to do all that we ask or think

to do above all that we ask or think

to do abundantly above all that we ask or think

to do... exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Eph. 3:20.

The History of Gehazi: Solemn Lesson

Among the many instances of divine grace and illustrations of the gospel contained in the Old Testament, there are few more attractive than the story of Naaman (2 Kings 5).

Where is the evangelist that has not delighted to trace the thread of redeeming mercy toward that "honorable" but afflicted man, from the voice of "the little maid" in his own household, and the expostulation of his servants when his pride was roused, to the moment when, in obedience to the word of Elisha, he dipped himself seven times in Jordan's stream, and obtained the cure so ardently desired? "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" is the golden rule for the soul in having to do with God; and in becoming the Savior of sinners, Jesus Himself has trodden this path; He humbled Himself (Phil. 2). "God... giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5), to those who will take their true place before Him, as having sinned and perverted that which is right. To such the interpreter can say on God's part, "I have found a ransom" (Job 33:24); "his flesh shall be fresher than a child's" (v. 25).

But God, who fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich empty away, has placed side by side with this happy picture of deliverance and blessing, a most solemn example of divine warning and displeasure. The gospel is preached to those that are afar off, and to them that are nigh (Eph. 2:17); and the word to those that have been brought outwardly nigh, as Christendom has been, is "toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. 11:22).

Gehazi, the servant of God's prophet, had a position of privilege that was unique in his day. Associated with the man who had the divine testimony in Israel, he has a share in the giving, and raising from death, of the Shunammite's son, as well as the multiplication of the loaves and corn to the people (2 Kings 4). He also was with the prophet at the time, if he was not actually the "messenger" to bear the word of healing to Naaman. But vanity and the love of money lead him to falsify the grace of the God of Israel, expressed to this stranger; and the prophet has the melancholy experience of seeing the fresh springs of joy and healing corrupted in Naaman's heart as he starts away to his own land. Unless one had faith in God that He who had begun a good work in the Assyrian captain would complete it, we might well feel saddened and distressed that this soul that had so lately learned that blessing from God was "without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1) should have had his heart chilled by the reversal of the prophet's message. Who can tell if after all the mule's burden of earth was used on his return? (2 Kings 5:17.)

Gehazi's heart being set upon gain, he became blind to every other consideration. But there is one thing most striking about the narrative, and that is, that the moment his object is achieved, he has the conscience of a thief, and bestows his silver and garments in a secret place (v. 24). The attractiveness of sin is lost as soon as it is committed. "Ye shall be as gods" seemed fair, but the moment the sin and disobedience was committed, the first pair learned that they were "naked" in the eyes of God and of one another. Who would envy Gehazi his success obtained by lying and deceit? Hardened by unbelief and deceived by Satan, he comes and stands again before his

master. He meets the prophet's searching question again with untruth, but he has to learn to his own confusion that neither God nor the prophet was deceived, though he had been, and that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). He had desired Naaman's money and apparel; he gets also his leprosy. He is numbered with the company of the many lepers in Israel (Luke 4:27), but with him is the added judgment that it should cleave to him and to his seed forever - a suggestion, we may surely say, of the endless doom that awaits those who neglect, refuse, or corrupt the grace of God as it is now expressed in the gospel of Christ. We last meet him in the king's presence (and such a king! see 2 Kings 8:4) striving apparently to stifle the accusings of a bad conscience with the pleasures of the world.

What a warning and a lesson for us! If it be with the lips only that we draw near to God, and the heart be far from Him (Matt. 15:8) after having been brought outwardly near and in a place of privilege, how shall we stand before a greater than Elisha "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Rom. 2:16)? It will be only to hear that awful word, "Depart" (see Matt. 7:21-23). To any such we would urge, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Hold Fast the Form of Sound Words

To hold fast the truth in the form God has given it, the type, the shape in which He has expressed it, is of all importance.... We are only sure of the truth when we retain the very language of God which contains it.

It Is Written: "Have Ye Not Read?"

The following passage will prove that the ground which our Lord took with the scribes, Pharisees, etc., was that they should have known what was revealed in the Scriptures. When quoting Exod. 3:6, "I am... the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," He first says, "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God?" (Matt. 22:31). "Have ye not read?" He asks. Alas! might not the same be often said to us? When some difficulty or testing time comes, have we read and understood? Have we the light from God's Word which will guide us aright?

Our Lord quoted Hos. 6:6, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," on two occasions (Matt. 9:13 and 12:7); and on both He told the Pharisees that they ought to have known the meaning of the words. They had the letter of Scripture, but they did not comprehend its meaning or application. This is a most practical and important consideration for us. For, while we would strongly maintain the value of the very words of Scripture, being inspired, and therefore a divine and unimpeachable foundation for faith, yet, on the other hand, we may have an intellectual acquaintance with the letter and not understand the meaning or application. To have a true intelligence in Scripture we must be "taught of God" and instructed by the Holy Spirit, who is given to the believer in order that he may understand the things which are freely given to him of God. "When thine eye is single," says our Lord, "thy whole body also is full of light." Christ, not self, must be our object. If any man desires to do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine (John 7:17); God's will, not our own, must be the motive spring. Thus, when there is simplicity and a true desire to learn, God gives the wisdom and understanding needed; and the Scripture becomes daily more precious, for it ever reveals Christ to the soul.

Christ Himself is in truth the center around which all circles, from the beginning of Genesis to the last chapter of the Old Testament; and therefore we read that He expounded from these very scriptures, "the things concerning Himself." Sometimes He was the subject of distinct prophetic testimony, which referred to Him and to no other; sometimes the communication from God through the inspired witnesses of old took the form of types and shadows, of which He was the antitype and substance. But not one jot or tittle of the law could fail; all must come to pass. Christ was Himself the filling up of the outline traced by the sacred writings of old. He says Himself, "I am come... to fulfill." Someone has remarked that the word here translated "fulfill" signifies that "He came to make good the whole scope of the law and the prophets... He came as the revealed completeness of God's mind, whatever the law and the prophets had pointed out."

Thus our blessed Lord, after the close of His ministry on earth, when risen from the dead, referred His disciples to the words He had spoken, that "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me." Luke 24:44.

This was the threefold division of the Old Testament well known to the Jews - Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. All that was written concerning Him "must be fulfilled," for thus "it is written."

Mark, the Lord did not instruct these two disciples on the road to Emmaus simply from His own divine knowledge, apart from the written Word; on the contrary, He made use of the Scriptures, and taught them from the Scriptures, leading them over a wide range; beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. What honor He placed on the Scriptures! Then, as we find a little later on, He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. The opened understanding, the divinely given intelligence, was just as necessary as the possession of the Scripture itself; and this we have, as already remarked, by the Holy Spirit, who came down on the day of Pentecost. Further, Christ said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Luke 24:46, 47.

Here He places side by side the prophetic testimony pointing to His death, and what was suitable, as well as absolutely necessary for the remission of sins, for God's glory and the eternal blessing both of His Church and of Israel.

Turning again to the references made by our Lord to the Old Testament, we find that when quoting Exod. 21:17, He commences by saying, "For God commanded, saying," etc. (Matt. 15:4); and when quoting Gen. 2:24, He introduces the quotation with the words. "Have ye not read," etc. "God commanded," and "Have ye not read"-how emphatically this might be repeated in Christendom at the present day! Why all the false doctrine and confusion that exists? Is it not due to inattention to God's Word? Why the present confusion among the Lord's people? Is not this to be attributed in a large measure to a want of subjection in heart and soul to the teaching and guidance of Holy Scripture?

But the Bible is a God-given oracle, carrying His authority, perfectly adapted to every need, every circumstance, and every period of the Church's history. "Do ye not therefore err?" He says to the unbelieving Sadducees. And why did they err? because they knew "not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." Herein was the fault - they knew not the Scriptures. Man, when left to the petty reasonings of his own mind, gets into all kinds of folly; he falls into superstition on the one hand, or infidelity on the other. But both these extremes agree in shutting out God's Word. It has been Satan's object in all ages to cut out the Word of God; or, if he cannot do so, to render it null and void. Sometimes he accomplishes this by insinuating doubts, raising the question, Is it even so that God has said? - in our own day this takes the form of "modernism." Sometimes he displaces the Scripture by tradition and the teachings and doctrines of men.

Our Lord Himself answered all such suggestions. He met Satan in person by the all-sufficient word, "It is written." He met the Sadducees, whom we may call the "modernists" of that day, as He also met the Pharisees and scribes - those tradition mongers of old - by the simple word, "God said," "Did ye never read in the Scriptures?" "What is this then that is written?" He used the written Word to silence every objection and to refute every form of error; and surely if He thus accredited the Scripture, this is enough for all who have reverence for Him.

The Word of God is "living" and "abiding." It has ever an unchanged freshness and living power for the heart of the Christian. This must be so, for it reveals God in all His infiniteness, His love, His grace, His near and blessed relationship as Father. It gives us, by inspiration, the life, the very words of Jesus Himself, who, as the living Word, tabernacled among men, full of grace and truth.

"The Scripture cannot be broken," says the Lord Jesus. Again He says: "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?" John 5:46, 47. Here the Lord binds together the writings of Moses (the Scriptures) and His own words; and He ascribes an authority as great, if not greater, to the written Word than to the spoken Word. So it is said in another place, "They believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." John 2:22.

Even when the dark shadows of the cross were falling on His path, He still used the written Word as that which had marked all out beforehand. In quoting Isa. 53:12, concerning Himself-"And He was reckoned among the transgressors" the Lord introduces the quotation with the words, "This that is written must yet be accomplished in Me." Again, in referring to Zech. 13:7, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad," He commences by saying, "For it is written." For Him the Word was everything. It was given by God, it was inspired by the Holy Ghost, it was the guide and resource at all times; it was that of which no part could remain unfulfilled.

May God by His Holy Spirit deepen in all our souls the value of Holy Scripture, and daily increase our relish for it! - not merely for certain favorite portions, but for all Scripture. We cannot afford to leave aside any portion without loss to the soul. And

may He grant to every reader that Spirit-taught subjection of heart and soul which is the true way to possess intelligence in His mind as revealed to us in the inspired volume!

What would thousands of devoted men of old-the early Christians, the Reformers, and many others among the persecuted saints of God in bygone days - have given to possess an open Bible, and the full liberty to read it, which is ours? Let us see to it that we do not lightly value our privileges, but let us seek grace and power from God to make a good use of what He has so freely given us.

Joy or Sorrow: Nothing Is Added by Either

You must not attach too much importance to your joy.. nor to your distress.... You can add nothing by joy or sorrow to the perfect work of Christ.... If someone has paid my debts, my sorrow at the folly that contracted them or my joy at their being discharged adds nothing whatever to the payment of the debts, though both be natural and just.

Jude 20-23; Malachi 3:16-17

Mal. 3:16 and 17 refers primarily to the godly remnant in Israel at the close of the old dispensation. All was ruin and apostasy around them; but they feared the Lord, thought upon His name, and spoke often one to another. They did not attempt to set up anything, or reconstruct a fallen system; they owned the ruin, feared the Lord, and communed one with another.

Jude 20-23 gives us a Christian remnant in the midst of the ruin of professing Christianity. You will find it interesting and instructive to mark the points of similarity and of contrast in these two passages of Scripture.

The Knowledge of God

God alone is the teacher of the knowledge of Himself, and he who would know God must needs go to God's school to be taught. Natural science is acquired by toil and search, but the knowledge of God is gained by faith in His Word. God's ways are not man's. The first lesson learned in God's school is faith, and all must enter this school at the infant class; for except a man be converted and become as a little child, he shall fail to know God.

The Last Days: by Paul, Peter, John, and Jude

There are two senses in which the expression "last days" is used in the New Testament. In the opening of the epistle to the Hebrews there is mention of "these last days." There it is intended to designate this present dispensation. But the expression is also applied to the closing days of this present dispensation. In this way it is used in 2 Timothy 3: "In the last days perilous times shall come"; that is, in the closing season of Christendom. To this season Jude also refers, when he speaks of "the last time" when there should be mockers (v. 18).

Now it is important that we should know what are the features which the Spirit of God describes as attaching to these "last days."

In this epistle (Jude) we find two distinct marks by which the Holy Ghost has described the closing hour of this dispensation. 1) The spirit of intellectual liberty, or of free-thinking, which rejects the mysteries of God. 2) The prevalence of moral laxity.

In 2 Peter 3, we are told that "there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" Here "the last days" are marked by a spirit of scoffing, and the object of it is one of God's precious mysteries-the second advent, or coming of the Lord.

If we turn to the first epistle of John, we find the same thing spoken of as the spirit of antichrist, which was already working, and which scorns the mysteries of the truth. "Little children," he says, "it is the last time" (1 John 2:18); and then he describes what characterizes the last time - the denial that Jesus is the Christ - the denial of the Father and the Son.

Now from these two witnesses (Peter and John), we get one very definite character of the last times. They are to be marked by a scoffing and infidel spirit which mocks at the coming of the Lord, and which denies the great mystery of the Persons of the Godhead.

If we refer to the epistle of Jude, we shall find it is not these features which are given as marking "the last days," but a fearful state of moral laxity, such as Paul gives us in 2 Timothy 3. It is moral laxity which is spoken of in both these epistles. According to the testimony by Paul, men are "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud,... unholy,... incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more [or, rather] than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." This is an awful picture. And remember, it is Christendom that is described. It is not about the heathen world that Paul is speaking. The anticipations of Peter and John and Paul and Jude are about Christendom. They instruct us beforehand that the last days of Christendom are to be marked by a fearful moral or practical condition, as well as by an infidel and scoffing spirit which rejects the mysteries of the truth.

Now you may ask me, What have we to do with these things? Ah! beloved friends, we have to do with them. We ought to know the enemies against whom we have to contend - the forms of

Satan's power against which we have to watch; and it will not do to escape one of the snares, and fall into the other. It will not do to guard only the mysteries of truth; we must watch over our whole behavior, that we do not slip into the general practical condition of the "last days." It is very likely that both the features described will not attach to the same person. The modern infidel-thinking intellectualist may be moral and amiable, while the man of ungodly walk may be the professor of an orthodox creed. Jude does not glance at that of which John speaks.

Now I desire to be practical - to direct your attention specially to one point. When the Holy Ghost takes His rightful direction, He speaks of Christ - of the common salvation. His office is to "take the things of Christ, and show them unto us." But He is in the place of service in the Church; and therefore, when there is mischief at the doors, He turns aside and exhorts to "contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." It is not for orthodoxy that saints are here exhorted to contend, but for the holiness of the faith. We are exhorted to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," against the "ungodly men" who are described as "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness"; the "ungodly men" who deny - not the Father and the Son, but who deny t h e "LORD" Jesus Christ. Mark! who deny Jesus Christ, not as a Savior, but Jesus Christ as a LORD; that is, who practically gainsay His authority - who "despise dominion," or lordship - who reject restraints. Jude is not speaking of Jesus as a Savior, but of Jesus as a Lord. His government is the thought in the mind of the Holy Spirit here. We should welcome this as a sound and salutary word. Is it not evil when a saint does not exercise this continual check on his thoughts, his tongue, his doings? We are not to say our thoughts, or our lips, or our hands, or our feet are our own. They should be understood to be under lordship. We are not to despise dominion.

The epistle of Jude puts every one of us on a holy watchtower, to watch, not against a spirit that would gainsay the precious mysteries of God (Peter and John's word does that), but against the tendencies of the natural heart to gratify itself. The Spirit of God is active - the Spirit is life - the cherubim were all eyes; and the saint should be all living, holy activity. If Peter put you looking in one direction - watching against the forms and actions of the infidel mind - Jude erects another watchtower from which we are to look out and guard against the self-indulgent and defiling ways that would reduce the whole moral man- to watch against the spirit that gainsays the lordship of Jesus over the thoughts, the doings, and the goings of His people.

Then he goes on to say, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." Here you observe how wonderfully fruitful in instruction is the Book of God. We get instruction drawn from the history of heaven. The Spirit in Jude gives it to us (v. 6). He then descends the stream of divine history from the beginning, and gathers these various examples to press them on ourselves, to warn us against a state of moral laxity. And mark how he describes these ungodly despisers of dominion. "These are spots in your feasts of charity,... feeding themselves without fear." The absence of this "fear" indicates this state of moral laxity of which I speak.

O beloved! I would that this word on which we are meditating might incite us to "gird up the loins" of our mind. Do we imagine that we have a right to take our own way in anything? We have no such right. As has been said, "The moment you do a thing because it is your own will, you have sinned." To do our own will because it is our own will is the very essence of rebellion against God.

He then goes back to the prophecy of Enoch. What is it? Is it a prophecy of the Lord coming to visit those who are under the power of the infidel spirit? No; but to execute judgment upon the ungodly, for all "their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed." It is on ungodliness that the judgment is anticipated to fall. And if you and I look around upon Christendom, even now, shall we not see a prevalence of ungodliness enough to provoke the judgment of the Lord?

But let us take this word home to ourselves. May the Spirit apply it to the conscience. If I take my own will as the rule of my actions, and thus "despise dominion," I am (in the principle of my mind) on the road to the judgment of which Enoch prophesied.

O beloved! may we welcome this exhortation. Do you wish the Church of God relaxed in its behavior and moral ways? Is it not to bow to the cross- to the scepter of Jesus? If He be a Savior, He is also a Lord.

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith."

There again is the same subject of warning. The saints are urged to build themselves up on their "most holy faith." "Keep yourselves in the love of God." And what is "the love of God" of this passage? It is the love of God of the 15th of John. "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." It is the complacential love of Christ. Does this make the path of a saint legal? No; it only binds the heart to Jesus with a new cord as the fresh spring of our affections - the object of all our desire.

Then again, "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Does he speak here of the infidel spirit? No; but take care lest the garment spotted by the flesh get around you.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling"; that is, not from the truth, but from the holiness of the truth; for it is added, "and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

In conclusion, let me repeat it, may we welcome this word of warning. Would that it were sounded in the ears of all the people of God. Let them know that we are living in a day of easiness and self-seeking. Christendom is filling itself with a thousand gratifications. Every hour is multiplying the means and opportunities of indulging nature. The lusts of the mind (Eph. 2) are greatly nurtured. Skill of all kinds, and labor too, is taxed to contribute to their indulgence. "The lusts of the flesh" are all akin to this. Oh, may we, in the midst of it all, love the lordship of Jesus! Let us bow to His scepter. Let us kiss it more and more; and instead of saying, "This is my pleasure - that is my will," let us pray that Jesus may reign in our hearts, "The Lord of every motion there."

But again, let me remind you, it is Jesus that is to be our Lord - He who loved us and gave Himself for us - He who has saved His people. And He is to be served, not in the spirit of bondage, or the mere observance of religious rites and injunctions, but in the spirit of liberty and love - a spirit that can trust Him at all times, and that can take all conscious short-coming and failure to a throne of grace through Him, with happy boldness. O beloved! it would be but a poor return for His love and salvation to watch in any wise as against Him, and not entirely for Him, for He has "not given us the spirit of fear, but... of love." May we watch, therefore, that He may be glorified in us by free and

happy service now while He is absent, that we may be glorified in Him when He shall appear to take us to Himself (John 14:3).

Last Interview With Departing Servant ... : J.N. Darby With J.G. Bellett

Sadly altered was the poor worn-out body, pillowed in an easy chair, but his spirit rejoicing in his much-loved Lord. He said, "Two months ago, when I felt this sickness was unto death, I asked Him to reveal Himself to me in increased loveliness and nearness. He did; He filled me with Himself; I know the blood has done its blessed, blessed work for my soul; it is His love, His beauty, His perfection, that fills my heart and vision." He then spoke of feeling a little better that day; "But, all! that is no pleasure to me." Then, clasping his dear, thin hands together, he said, while tears flowed down his face, "My precious Lord Jesus, Thou knowest how fully I can say with Paul, to depart and be with Thee is far better! Oh, how far better! I do long for it! They come and talk to me of a crown of glory - I bid them cease; of the glory of heaven - I bid them stop. I am not wanting crowns - I have HIMSELF! HIMSELF! I am going to be with HIMSELF: ah! with the Man of Sychar; with Him who stayed to call Zacchaeus; with the Man of the 8th of John; with the Man who hung upon the cross; with the Man who died; Oh! to be with Him before the glories, the crowns, or the kingdom appear! It's wonderful wonderful!-with the Man of Sychar alone; the Man of the gate of the city of Nain! and I am going to be with Him forever! exchange this sad, sad scene, which cast Him out, for His presence. Oh, the Man of Sychar!"

Let Her Alone

"Let her alone: against the day of My burying hath she kept this." John 12:7.

Mary of Bethany, who had ere this found her happy place at the Master's feet, came to the supper prepared for Him just six days before His death, and poured upon His feet her very costly ointment of spikenard, the odor of which filled the house.

Her act of devotedness was directed toward the Lord Himself. It was in the nature of intelligent worship, but it provoked the hostility of the disciples. To them it was a "waste." They said that it should have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor. To them worship so pure and elevated seemed superfluous.

But the blessed Master viewed it otherwise, and placed upon it His own gracious interpretation. What they called a "waste," He recognized as heartfelt worship. In what they considered loss to "the poor," He saw an apprehension on her part of His coming death, an appreciation of His sufferings, which marked her as being in possession of the truth in a way unknown to them. "Against the day of My burying hath she kept this," were His words, just as though He gave her credit for anticipating and preparing for His burial; just as though it had been the leading thought in her mind, while His kingdom and glory had occupied those of the disciples. But the glory is reached through death. She was right, and they were 'wrong; and therefore He gently screens her from their cruel censures. He will not allow her to suffer under their aspersion. He spreads His sheltering wing around her, and firmly says, "Let her alone." If none can value her devotedness, He can, and does; and that is enough for Mary. Her Master's smile suffices. The sense of giving Him pleasure compensates for the misunderstanding of man. Blessed experience!

"Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Luke 13:8, 9.

"Let it alone this year also" was the prayer of the dresser of the vineyard on behalf of the fruitless fig tree. The lord of the vineyard had come and looked for fruit for three years and, being utterly disappointed, he gave commandment that it should be cut down. The tree cumbered the ground. It was occupying space that could be planted with profit. It was not only fruitless, but it was doing mischief. Such a fate became it. But the dresser, knowing that his lord was not a "hard man," and divining his thoughts of mercy, prayed that another year of grace might be shown, during which time he would do all in the way of pruning and culture that could be done; then, if fruit were still wanting, the blow should fall.

His prayer was granted, and the tree was "let alone" for one year more. But the fruitless fig tree fell. Israel, illustrated thus, yielded no fruit; Christ came seeking fruit and found none. Judgment called loudly for the cutting down of the fruitless tree, but mercy interposed, and another year of grace (protracted indeed until the death of Stephen; that is, until the definite rejection of the Holy Ghost) was allowed. Then the stroke fell; and the fruitless, mischievous nation was cut down as a nation. But how mercy lingered! How judgment delayed! How the voice of patient grace was heard

saying, "Let it alone."

If that be true in the case of a nation, is it not likewise true in the case of the individual? "This year also"-and also, and also-until, alas! in spite of great long suffering, no fruit can be found; and then, "after that," judgment, long suspended, overtakes the sinner, and he is "cut down"!

"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Matt. 15:14.

A solemn verdict this-awfully solemn! It was spoken by Christ in reference to the false teachers of that day - the teachers who placed tradition above Scripture, and who taught

for doctrines the commandments of men. Of religion (such as it was) they had plenty, for they drew nigh with their mouth, but their heart was far from God. Oh, what a difference! Mouth-religion may be musical, eloquent, attractive, imposing, but most delusive. It may consist of prayer and chant and oratory, but never affect either the throne of God or the conscience of man. It may present the most splendid appearance outwardly, and withal leave the soul barren and unsatisfied.

It may appeal to history, to language, to learning, or to fathers, but pass over the plain, palpable facts of Scripture. The light of truth, its liberty, its moral power-all is unknown. It dwells in the unspiritual darkness of human thoughts and reasonings. Its teachers are blind, and by them the blind are led.

True of the first century, it is true of all others. The disease is chronic. Moreover, rebuke is unbearable. They "were offended, after they heard this saying." They are offended still. Nothing offends more quickly or deeply or unpardonably than the exposure of a false religion; and, strange contradiction, the more false and foolish, the greater the tenacity with which it is held!

Thank God, the written Word, when received by lowly faith, makes all plain; but as to the proud teachers of a tradition that is contrascriptural, "Let them alone," says the Lord. They have made their bed; they must lie in the same.

"Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Hos. 4:17.

"Joined to idols"-not merely idolatrous, bad as that may be, but definitely joined to them in a fearful and daring unity. Recovery appears hopeless. A long course of tampering with evil has not only blunted the conscience, but turned the evil into a pleasure; and every sense of what is due to God is dulled, so that the idols assert their authority, and God is forsaken. Alas, that the heart should thus become entrapped, Satan so easily conquer, and man fall so completely! Yet so it is; and when Ephraim is thus joined hopelessly and willingly to idols, the only, but terrible, sentence is "Let him alone." He must be left to the governmental ways of God. The ministry of man must not now interfere. He has chosen his course, and selected his path, and he must rue his folly. A man's way is his reward. What he sows he reaps. The object of his worship gives form to his life and character-to his future. Such is the nature of God's government, and therefore He said, as to idol-ruined Ephraim, "Let him alone."

To be let alone by God is the most awful condition in which man can find himself. Ten thousand times better to be emptied from vessel to vessel, like Job, than allowed to drift down the stream, like Ephraim. Better to feel the weight of God's hand in chastening-for it is a Father's hand-than

exist under a sense of His averted countenance.

Thank God there is grace as well as government, and His desire is that His people should "continue in the grace of God."

What a wide difference between the let alone that was passed on the conduct of Mary, and that passed on Ephraim; between the "let her alone" of divine approval, and the "let him alone" of divine displeasure; between the shield of heavenly shelter and the sentence of holy condemnation.

Dear reader, may you know and enjoy the first for your own comfort, and for the joy and glory of the blessed Lord who died and rose in order to give us a place at His feet, as the happy, blood-bought worshipers of a Savior who knows how to appreciate the smallest oblation that love can bring.

The Life: the Manifestation of Life

We are told that "the whole world lieth in wickedness," or "the wicked one" (1 John 5:19; J.N.D. Trans.), and that we "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all [Jews as well as Gentiles] had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh,... and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Eph. 2:2, 3. What a solemn statement as to the condition of man in the world! The whole world lying in the wicked one! Children of disobedience, energized by the prince of this world! By nature the children of wrath! How terrible, and how absolutely hopeless the condition!

Yet this is the condition of the "first man" as described by the Spirit of God, and that too, after four thousand years of testing with every appliance for his recovery. But there was no recovery for the first man. The ruin was complete and irretrievable. He had fallen under the power of Satan, and his life was blighted and utterly corrupted_ by sin. Without law, he was lawless; under law, a transgressor; in the presence of grace, in God come down to earth, revealed in the Son, he was a God-hater. Such was the terrible condition of man, in whom the fountain of life was corrupted and ruined.

Blessed be God, another life has been manifested in the very scene where the first was destroyed, a life that subsisted in the Son with the Father from all eternity, and was manifested in Him down here on earth before the eyes of men. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:14. This was a new beginning for man in grace, and the revelation of a new life for man, a life that was before all worlds, and before all creatures, and a life that Satan could not touch, nor sin corrupt. This new beginning is life revealed in the Person of the eternal Son in manhood down here; and so the Apostle says in his first epistle. "That which was from the beginning." It is not the same as "In the beginning" in John's gospel, where the eternity of the Word is the subject. "In the beginning was the Word." The Word existed in the beginning, did not begin to exist then, but existed, and, moreover, spoke into existence everything that began to exist.

In the epistle of John, "the beginning" is the beginning of the manifestation of eternal life on earth, in the Person of God's Son become man. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men here below; and through the veil of flesh His glory shone out before their eyes. They saw Him as an only begotten with a Father, and the fullness of grace and truth was there for man. What a wonderful beginning! He was the "Word of life." "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." "Light" and "life," "grace and truth," shone out in Him amid "the darkness" of this world. It was a wonderful display! It was God Himself come down into all the misery and wretchedness of man-God manifested in the flesh. All that God is in light and love, truth and holiness, righteousness and grace, shone out. "The life was manifested," and in this life there was the display of all that God could be in eternal blessing, for His lost and guilty creatures. The life was manifested in the Person of the eternal Son become man; and dwelling among men, the light of

life shone out amid the darkness, and shone for every man, not for Jews only, but for Gentiles as well. It was the brightness of heaven itself let down into the darkness here, and shining for all, just as the sun, the mighty orb of the day, shines for the whole world.

I repeat, it was in the Person of the Son; and when men saw Him, they saw the life. Faith saw the life and rejoiced in its light. The apostles were attracted to its glory, shining out in Him, and became the witnesses to others of that wondrous life. In every word He spoke, in every movement, in every act, they saw the life shining out in its divine nature and character. They heard it, they saw it, they gazed on it, they handled it with their hands. The Apostle who wrote this epistle could say, "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." 1 John 1:2.

Yes, they saw the life, and followed its pathway of light through this dark world. They witnessed its patient ministry of love and mercy, in ten thousand ways relieving from the misery and wretchedness sin had brought in. Then, last of all, and greatest of all, they saw it meeting man's utmost need in that terrible cross, where all that God is in majesty and lowliness shone out in the judgment of sin; and all that He is in love and grace shone out in righteous blessing for man. The resurrection witnessed eternal victory over sin and over all the power of Satan.

The clouds of darkness were now broken; God had come out, and the clear light was now shining out in all the glory of grace, witnessing unhindered and unlimited blessing for man. The apostles saw, believed, and possessed. They were made partakers of the life, and brought into fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The revelation of this life was a revelation of blessing, to them and all who receive their word, bringing into a fellowship which lifts the soul above the circumstances of misery and sorrow through which we pass in this world. They saw the life displayed, and not only were quickened with it, but also drank in its spirit and character, as they beheld its outgoings in the blessed Son of God. Partakers of the divine nature, they were also filled with common thoughts, desires, delights, and joys with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ; and this is an established and known relationship, of which Christ is the measure and character. Who can estimate the blessedness of this?

And now the Apostle says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." v. 3. The apostles saw, and have borne witness; we have believed, and enter into fellowship with them. What more could we ask on this side of the glory, than to be brought into a fellowship like this? How unspeakably great the blessing!... Surely this is enough to fill and satisfy the soul. It is by faith we enter into it now, but it is what we shall have in glory.... We are not there yet; but it is all unfolded to us, and faith drinks it in, and the heart and affections are molded by it, and find their home there.

Living by the Word

In proportion as we desire the sincere milk of the Word, we grow thereby.

There needs to be the constant drawing from the source of life-the blessed fountain of God's truth. We shall find in it the cordial, the balm, or the medicine suited to our need, and daily food. Its power on the heart brings forth the expression in the life.

Until the Word has its proper place in the believer's heart, there is no stability-we are led by feelings, and when these fail, dearth and barrenness come in because we have failed thus to cultivate our strength, drinking in the sincere milk of God's Word. However, truth does not keep us-dependence only on Him who is the author of it can keep our souls alive today. It is a trying day for God's people, so little energy and zeal, and, worst of all, too much neglect of the study of His precious Word. It only is life and marrow to the soul, a lamp to guide, milk to nurse, and meat to strengthen.

The Love of Christ

The great thing that God calls upon me for, is to admire and delight in and learn more and more of the love of Christ. What is the effect? Love to Christ is produced in the very same ratio that I know His love to me. What is it that judges self and keeps it down and raises a person above all groveling ways and ends? Entrance into the blessedness of His love.

Having Loved His Own ... He Loved Them Unto the End

These precious words are found in John 13:1. Most of us know that "to the end" there means on and on, through every day. That is, He has loved and loves us with a love that nothing can stop; nothing can make Him cease to love us. We are loved with a love that will never cease to love us!

It is a little remarkable too, right in that connection, we find a passage in Hebrews 13 which says, "Let brotherly love continue." What does that mean? Just exactly what it says: that it is to continue-to never cease. Our brethren cannot act worse toward us, nor we toward them, than the disciples did toward the Lord. "This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." John 15:12. This means that we are to love our brethren in the same way - the same manner - on and on through and through-in spite of everything.

The way in which this love has to manifest itself, of course, has to do with the way in which others conduct themselves. We find John lying on the Savior's breast, and we find Peter denying Him with oaths and cursing. He loved them both with the same love, but that love had to manifest itself according to the ways of each. I speak of the principle now. Of John it is written, "He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto Him, Lord, who is it?" John 13:25. Here is intercourse-communion.

What about Peter's denying Him with oaths and cursing? Is there communion there? Oh, no. The cock crows, and he remembers the words that Jesus spake unto him, and their eyes meet. That is, Peter's eye catches the Lord's eye, and the Lord's eye catches Peter's. What is the result? The poor failing one went out and wept bitterly. The Lord's love to Peter was not one whit less when he was denying Him than at any other time.

I was thinking a little of Martha's service to the Lord; it had become a burden (Luke 10:40-42). When service to the Lord becomes a burden, it loses its worth in His sight. And when does it become a burden? When love to Himself is not the spring; so we hear the dear soul saying, "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." She wants help. Her service has become a burden because He is not known as He should be, though in a sense He is the object of service; nevertheless, it is a burden.

Then there is that wonderful servant of God, Elijah. It is very interesting to note when we first meet him and when we leave him. He comes before us first directly from the presence of the Lord. Out of a hidden place he comes forth to speak; no one ever heard of him before, according to the record given in Scripture. He comes before us in this way: "As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." 1 Kings 17:1. A passage from the New Testament (Jas. 5:17) tells us he had been in communion with God about it. It was his love to the Lord's people, and his love to the Lord, that led him to say in substance, "Lord, if nothing else will bring the people to their senses - to a sense of their sin-withhold the rain." It was a hard thing to ask, yet it was love that led to it. He got the answer.

Elijah goes on, and after a while we find him leaving this world, and oh what a departure! He was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire. Next we see him, not going to heaven, but in the glory itself,

and there with the Lord and with Moses (Matt. 17:3). But what preceded his going to heaven that way? He was a man overcome with evil. What! you say, a man that went to heaven in a chariot of fire, and was seen on the mount of glory, and in the glory with the Lord and Moses, was overcome of evil? Yes, he was, and there is nothing more easy than for a godly heart to be overcome of evil if there is not the continuance of love. You ask, How was he overcome of evil? What do we find him doing? Making intercession against Israel (Rom. 11:2). "Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, and digged down Thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life." Then he asked to die. He was overcome of evil in that way.

We are told to not be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21). That love with which we are loved, and the love with which we are to love, is the love of Christ-it never can be overcome of evil. Do not we feel the danger of being overcome with evil, being cast down, when we see evil coming in like a flood?

Now in John 13 it says, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Then what did He do? He laid aside His garments, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He had girded Himself. Instead of being all carried away with the thought that "now I am going to leave the world and depart to the Father," He was thinking of them. He says, as it were, "I know I will be up there, but I will not be happy without their fellowship and communion, and without My services I cannot have it, so I will just suit Myself to their need; I will take a position-an attitude - toward them that will maintain them in fellowship with Me while absent from them, until they need not that kind of service anymore." His is a love that never for a moment forgets its object. Oh what a humbling, blessed truth! how we feel more and more our utter unworthiness of it! Nothing humbles like grace - like love. That is the love we are loved with.

After He had rendered them that service - a type of the service in which. He is now engaged in order to sustain us in communion with Himself, which, so to speak, His love cannot do without - He sat down. All this took place in that upper chamber.

This is the only place that I remember that the Lord calls the attention of the disciples to the fact that He is their Lord and Master. "Know ye not what I have done to you? Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet." vv. 12-14. Never had He said this before. Then He says, "If ye know these things" - what? - "happy are ye?" No, it does not say that. There is a little word of two letters in there that is important: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Do what? Wash one another's feet.

Now we all know, if we know what communion with Christ is, that there is no such thing as going on with Him without His doing for us what He did for His disciples. It is utterly impossible for us to restore our souls. "He restoreth my soul." We are dependent on Him for the restoration of the soul as well as for its salvation. We cannot get on without this service - we cannot get on without the Lord. There is another thing, brethren: **WE CANNOT GET ON WITH ONE ANOTHER WITHOUT KNOWING HOW TO DO IT WITH ONE ANOTHER.**

He says distinctly, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." And how often have we felt the communion broken-a cloud between. How is it going to be removed? There is just one way, and

that is to put the feet into His hands. That is all. We will never get the cloud removed in any other way. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Just so, unless there is this service one to another, there is no going on with one another. Think of the love that we are loved with-the love of Christ.

What the heart feels the need of is personal communion with Christ. What He looks for and values above everything else is personal devotedness to Himself; and no amount of service can ever compensate, can ever make up to Him, for communion with Himself. If there is devotedness, there will be communion; if there is communion, there will be service.

Luke 22-24: Notes of a Lecture

Luke 22-24

Our blessed path, while waiting for God's Son from heaven, is to feed upon Him as the living bread. In the midst of the toils, and tossings, and buffetings which belong to God's people in this world where they must be for a little while, He gives Himself as the food of our hearts; and all that He was as a man here below becomes most precious to us. We must see Him crucified to be able to feed upon Him as the incarnate Savior.

In the Gospel of Luke you get the Lord Jesus especially brought before you as the Son of man. I have often remarked the contrast there is between John's gospel and Matthew's. In John's gospel He is the Son of God—a divine Person. Whether in Gethsemane or on the cross you get no suffering at all. It is the same scene, and you will find that when the band of men come to take Him, He says, "I am He." They fell to the ground when they heard this, and if He had walked away He might have left them lying there; but He gave Himself up freely to them, and showed His loving care of His disciples by saying, "If... ye seek Me, let these go their way." He puts Himself forward in the gap that they might escape.

When on the cross you do not get in John's gospel any mention of "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He gave up His own spirit. He said, "It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." In Matthew you get the other side in Gethsemane, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me," etc.; and on the cross, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

When I turned to Luke, I was struck in reading what might appear a difficulty to the mind. It brought out Christ in a special way, so I speak of it now. In Luke's gospel you have more suffering in Gethsemane than in any other gospel, and on the cross none at all. Why is this? Why do I find Him on the cross above it all? It brought home to my soul all the blessed truth of how thoroughly He was man. "Handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." He would have us remember this.

He wants us to recollect for the precious comfort of our souls how perfectly He is man. (See chapter 22:39.) He went as He was wont to the mount of Olives, and when He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast He kneeled down and prayed. In Luke you find Him constantly praying as man - perfect Man, obedient and dependent. We get Him all night in prayer to God in Luke 6:12. We get Him again going up into a mountain to pray, and as He prayed He was transfigured (chap. 9:28). Here He prays, saying, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup." Mark, then, how in this gospel you get more development of the sufferings of Christ in Gethsemane than in any other.

"Being in an AGONY He prayed more earnestly." The more He felt the depths of this dreadful cup, the more earnestly He prayed. With us too often the trouble that fills our minds turns us away from God, but it drew His soul out as man more earnestly, and brought Him to God. "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when He... was come to His disciples,

He found them sleeping for sorrow." The poor disciples were sleeping for sorrow while He was praying more earnestly in an agony.

We have here a threefold picture of man. In the disciples we see what man is in his infirmity; in Judas, man in his hatred and wretched wickedness; and in Christ, man in His perfection. When we come to the cross we find no trace of the agony or sorrow. He had gone through it all in spirit in Gethsemane, and He was above it all. (I am not speaking now of His atoning work, for we do not get that here.) There is no mention of the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Here I find the perfection of Christ as man. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." You have the perfect unclouded consciousness of the Man giving up His spirit in full confidence to His Father. You see that characterizes all that Christ was on the cross. (See chanter 23:34.) We see Him entirely above all the circumstances by which He was surrounded, so completely above them that His occupation is with others. first word is, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

The wretched malice and wickedness of man had led Him to His crucifixion, but the poor Jews did not know what they were doing.

It is not judgment here, but simply a divine Person suffering as a man, yet above it all, but One who could say, "Father, forgive them." Go through all the insults here recounted which they heaped upon Him. They parted His raiment and cast lots; they derided Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself." The soldiers also mocked Him, and the very malefactors railed on Him, and what do I find? That He is above it all. He can turn to the poor thief beside Him with these words, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." There was a blessed work going on in the poor malefactor's heart when he said, I am dying, and You are dying, but "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

The Lord could tell this poor thief TODAY, though he had asked Jesus to remember him when He returned in His kingdom. He believed in the kingdom when the King was rejected. Blessed faith! But the Lord was now showing the present place He was taking as man, and that he should not wait for that day of manifested glory, but that very day he should be with Him in paradise. Blessed compassion of the spirit of the Man Christ Jesus.

"And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness." In this gospel the blessed truth in Matthew and in Mark is passed over when He uttered that wondrous cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Here we find that "when Jesus had cried with a LOUD voice" (which is specially noted here), He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," showing, as a man, perfect faith and confidence in His Father. If we have seen Jesus at the right hand of God, we can say as Stephen did, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"; but He could say, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." This blessedness He had as man, that passing through the bitterness of the cup of wrath, we see Him go into its fullest depths. The agony such that His sweat was as it were great drops of blood, yet He passed through it all with God, so that when He came to the cross we find no mention of suffering. He is above it all!

In a certain sense this is our place, if we could only be like Him. In our little conflicts and little sorrows, if we go through every trial with God beforehand, as He did, we shall have all settled according to God, and be really above the trial when it comes. Ours are little trials, no doubt, when

compared with His; still, they test us and try us; but the principle is the same. We have to follow in His steps. He had but one path; and whatever the sorrow or trial may be, if we could only go through it with God, even if it put us into an agony as it may (for presenting it to God makes it more acute), still, if I carry my agony to God, I shall be quite above the circumstances, having gone through them perfectly with God. As we see in the epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 2, He was the perfectly tried One, but always perfect in the trial. All is perfect in Him, and it does us good to meditate upon Him- to study what Christ was. "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." If we want to be like Him, we must see Him as the bread that came down from heaven. In studying what Christ is, we are taught by the Spirit of God. If you want to get the graciousness of Christ, if you want to grow in likeness to Him, you must feed upon Him. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2:8.

The Lord give us to feed upon Christ, and to dwell continually with Him, to get our hearts filled with the consciousness of what the Lord was, that we may be able more and more to understand the love and grace of God!

Mark 11:22-26

"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."

I have found this scripture of great benefit to myself and others in this connection. Here we have:

Faith -the "faith in God," that is, faith that takes its character and strength from God as its object-faith that brings God into the difficulty. There is a mountain to be removed. God only can lift a mountain up and throw it into the sea. But He is greater than the mountain; and if you can bring Him into the matter, the mountain must go.

Prayer is our proper attitude-what expresses our dependence on God - but the prayer of faith only is effectual.

3) There is a condition; that is, this prayer of faith is conditional on a certain

state in us, and that is the spirit of forgiveness. "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any." It is not here going to one who has wronged you, and telling him you forgive him. In such a case the word is, "If he repent, forgive him." But here it is the state of our hearts toward our brethren when we are in the presence of God. Suppose I am praying to God who has forgiven me ten thousand talents in absolute grace, and am holding something against one who may have wronged me, God will not hear me. I am not in communion, my state is wrong, I am not in the current of God's thoughts, and will not be able to exercise faith.

A person says: "I cannot feel right toward Mr. A." That is, he has hard feelings toward Mr. A. But can I think of God in this way? Can I speak of Him as having "hard feelings" toward anyone? Never. When we were enemies, He gave His Son. Now my heart is to be in the same state as His; that is, my feelings and desires are to be formed by what flows down in communion through the Word from His heart into mine. And if this is my state when I pray, I will forgive, if I have anything against anyone; and my heart will be free in God's presence. And, however my brother may have erred, I will be able to seek his blessing and restoration.

In case of personal difficulties among saints, if this state is reached in God's presence, it is wonderful how soon difficulties melt away, because it is God Himself coming in to act in grace.

The Martyred Remnant

We hear the conquerors over the beast celebrating their victory in Revelation 15. They are like Israel on the banks of the Red Sea, in Exodus 15. They stand on the sea, like the others, in triumph. I judge, however, that in the celebration of their conquest, we learn how it was they conquered. Just as in the song of Israel, Moses and the congregation rehearse not only the fact of victory, but the character of it. They sing of the horse and his rider being thrown into the sea. They publish God as a man of war, who had cast His enemies like lead into the mighty waters. They declare how the depths had covered the foe. Thus the song of triumph publishes the story, as well as the mere fact of the victory of the Red Sea. Israel had not fought - the battle was all the Lord's, and so the song declares. I believe, in like manner, the song in Revelation 15 lets us know what had been the strength and the weapons in that fiery fight which had now ended in victory, and was celebrating in heaven as the sea of glass.

All the world had "wondered" after the beast, and worshiped him. (See chap. 13.) His power appeared to be so great, his history so marvelous, that all the world bowed down to him, except, I may say, this martyred remnant, who refused his worship, and had to pay their lives as the price of their fidelity to the Lord. But the song utters the strength and weapons they had used in that glorious warfare, and it was this: They were admiring and worshiping the Lord God, while the world around them were admiring and worshiping the beast. The world was wondering at the greatness of the beast, and the marvelousness of his history; they were standing only in holy adoring wonder at the Lord God Almighty, the God of glory, and the greatness and marvelousness of His works. For so they now give utterance to the contents of their hearts (Rev. 15:3). And again, while the world was fearing the beast, or him who would kill the body (see again chap. 13), they feared Him whose judgments they knew were coming. They lived in the faith of the angel's voice which had sounded in their ears. (Compare chap. 14:7 with chap. 15:4.)

Thus, this fine but short song tells of the manner of the victory, as that on the Red Sea had done. Only the battle on the Red Sea had been fought entirely by the Lord alone for Israel. The battle with the beast had been fought by and in His martyr host, in the strength of the Holy Ghost, who put these weapons into their hands, and enabled them to use them.

These notices of coming days, beloved, have a voice for present days. We are to be warned by the character of the defeat of the whole world, and encouraged by the victory of the martyr band. The whole world is overcome into a shameless worship of the beast, through admiration and wonder at the greatness and strangeness of his ways and doings.

Does not this tell us to take care how we now follow the multitude in their idolatrous admiration of all the wonderful doings of the present generation? I am sure it does.

And what is my security? To grow IN ADMIRATION OF JESUS! To stand before the Lord in the spirit of my mind and say, "Great and marvelous are Thy works." And when these things begin to come to pass - when wonder at man's great and strange achievements is becoming the character

of the day... I am to know that things are ripening, and the judgment of the Lord will ere long be made manifest!

The Meekness and Gentleness of Christ

Nearing the end of his second letter to the Corinthians, the beloved Apostle uses these pleading words: "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:1).

Here was the sovereign remedy for softening hard hearts, calming angry spirits, and humbling proud wills.

Meekness is a treasure to be sought.

"Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth;... seek righteousness, seek meekness" (Zeph. 2:3).

If we feel that in us there is a deficiency of meekness, and perhaps some pride, what shall we do but seek Him in whom all meekness dwells? And is it not also true that gentleness is the result of a meek spirit, the fruit of a plant rooted in the nature of that meek and lowly One whose yoke we share?

"The fruit of the Spirit is... meekness" (Gal. 5:22, 23).

Thus Paul taught the Galatians, and then in his practical way bids them make use of it in dealing with a brother overtaken by a fault:

"Restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

Meekness will aim at restoration, rather than indulge in condemnation. It will be saying, I must be gentle, because tomorrow I may be in this same strait.

Nowhere is the need of meekness and gentleness more urgent than in the household of God. At no time is it harder to exhibit and practice meekness than when dealing with the disorderly, fainthearted, and weak members of the family. Only by wearing it constantly as one of the beautiful garments of grace, can we expect to be able to manifest it when specific occasion requires.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved,... meekness.... And above all these things put on charity [love], which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:12-14).

This is the Christian's judicial robe in which forbearance and forgiveness will be granted on a heavenly scale. "Even as Christ forgave you."

With the garment goes the interior adornment, for the eye which looks for more than outward beauty:

"The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Pet. 3:4).

In days when great gifts are so coveted and esteemed, and are so dangerous, let us not undervalue what He so highly prizes. It is a grace equally becoming to the young and old sister or brother in Christ.

Meekness is connected with keeping "the unity of the Spirit."

"With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2, 3).

Without these things there can be no practical expression of the oneness of the body of Christ. With them, how could heresy, high-mindedness, and other disruptive forces ever exist? The Lord knows them that are His. If we desire to manifest to them the preciousness of the place and portion which we, through grace, enjoy, meekness and wisdom far beyond our natural powers are necessary and available.

And if we consider the largest circle of our testimony, that is, the world at large, those quiet virtues have their place. We are "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men." Titus 3:2. Why? Because "We ourselves also were sometime foolish" (v. 3).

All we possess we owe to the kindness and love of God our Savior. Who are we that we should be anything but meek and gentle?

"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." 2 Tim. 2:25.

"But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:11, 12).

First flee as Joseph fled (Gen. 39); then follow hard as Caleb followed; then fight as Joshua fought, with full assurance of victory.

To be meek is not to be weak, morally or spiritually. Moses, renowned for his meekness (Numb. 12:3), was also renowned for his inflexible faithfulness (v. 7). The gracious lips of Him who is "meek and lowly in heart," blazed with fiery indignation against the scribes and Pharisees. We may safely follow our blessed Lord's steps, but with unshod feet, for we are prone to error. If so be that we must act in judgment, let it be on our knees in meekness and gentleness, for we ourselves need daily mercy as we need our daily bread.

"Blessed are the meek" (Matt. 5:5).

"The servant of the Lord must... be gentle unto all" (2 Tim. 2:24).

"O patient, spotless One,

Our hearts in meekness train,

To bear Thy yoke, and learn of Thee,

That we may rest obtain."

"Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.... Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Matt. 6:32, 34.

The anxiety that dreads an evil thing on the morrow is nothing but unbelief. When tomorrow comes, the evil may not be there; if it comes, God will be there too. When the heart bows to the will

of God about some sorrow that we dread, how often a sorrow is taken away, and the Lord meets us with unexpected kindness and goodness. He is able to make even the sorrow to be all blessing. Whatever be His will, it is good.

A Mine

The Word of God is an inexhaustible mine. Had men been digging and mining at some material ore ever since David, or Job, or Abel, what a marvel would it be considered if the precious vein still remained! Yet this is the fact with respect to the Bible, for the more taken, the more there seems to be left. And again, the deeper the miner in nature goes, the darker it is and the fouler the atmosphere; but the deeper we go into this mine, the greater the light and the purer the atmosphere; and the deeper the miner goes, the more he endangers life; but the deeper we go, knowing God and Christ, the safer we know ourselves to be.

Moses' Heavenly Glory

From Acts 7 we learn that the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by the earth was the occasion of giving Him a glory in heaven, and in connection with a family there, of an order higher than any glory He would have known or gathered had the earth received instead of rejecting Him. But that chapter also tells us, that that mystery had been typified in the histories of both Joseph and Moses. Joseph was sold, and Moses was refused, by his brethren; but, by reason of that, Joseph got joy and glory and a family in Egypt, and Moses got the same in Midian; and each of them was thus, in his day, a foreshadowing of the glory and joy of the Son of God in the midst of the Church or heavenly family, consequent on His being rejected in His day also by Israel and the earth.

But in the progress of Moses' history we get him a second time separated from Israel, such separation also being followed by the same heavenly results. The sin of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, by which the covenant was broken and the blessing forfeited, casts Moses again into the same heavenly character. Upon that sin of the golden calf, the tabernacle is removed and pitched without the camp, the Lord in righteousness disowning His revolted people. But there Moses meets Him, and meets Him too in a new way, "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exod. 33:11). This had not been so before. It was the expression of increased intimacy between the Lord and Moses. It was letting him into friendship with the Lord, such as the Church now stands in (John 15:15). It was a new thing with Moses, a fresh character of glory in him, as his previous dwelling in Midian among the Gentiles had been new in its day. And it was just the thing that distinguished Moses from all Jewish worthies or prophets, and took him above them, as we read: "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face." Deut. 34:10. And being in this place of intimacy, or in this heavenly place, he acts according to the high prerogatives of it. He passes and repasses between the glorious tabernacle which the cloud guarded, and the camp of the congregation. And this movement expressed his equal access to heaven and to earth, and thus showed that he was the mediator, the shadow of our heavenly Priest, Christ Jesus.

And in another case he acts according to the high prerogatives of this new and heavenly character. He marries an Ethiopian woman (Num. 12). He takes a wife from among the Gentiles, and those too who were, in common esteem, the very basest of the Gentiles (Jer. 13). His natural kindred, his connections in the flesh, were not prepared for this; and they speak against him, and are for refusing his place and authority. He being a man of heavenly temper, more meek than any who could have been found on the earth, says nothing to all this. But the Lord pleads his cause, and in doing so vindicates him on the very ground of that heavenly character which he had acquired in the days of the golden calf, or of the apostasy of the earthly people. "Hear now My words," says the Lord to Aaron and Miriam, "If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" Numb. 12:8.

Here the Lord very strikingly pleads in favor of Moses, and in full vindication of his doing an act which earthly or fleshly kindred did not understand, and were not prepared for, the intimacy with Himself which Moses had acquired by the former sin of that earthly people. That intimacy, or speaking "face to face" with the Lord, had thus raised him quite above the Jewish or earthly level, and had clearly given him a heavenly character, one of the prerogatives of which he had been now exercising, in marrying an Ethiopian woman, as he had before, as I have shown, exercised another of them, in passing a n d repassing between the Lord in the tabernacle of glory and the camp of the people.

And I must notice the value of the word "all" in this passage. It is very striking in connection with my subject - "who is faithful in all Mine house," says the Lord, words which went to tell Aaron and Miriam that Moses was a person of special dignity, having access to all parts of the Lord's house. It was not only that he was faithful, but faithful in all parts of the house, having title to be in the holiest, or heavenly, place, as well as in the tabernacle of the congregation, or the courts. For it is Moses' dignity as well as fidelity that his divine Advocate is here pleading.

Thus' Moses becomes a partaker of the heavenly calling, and, according to this, as we may now further see, at the end he occupies the heavenly place.

We see him for instance in the Mount Pisgah, viewing the land of Canaan, stretched out beneath him (Deut. 34). That was a new mount of God to him. It lay a little outside the promised land, but it afforded him a full view of it. It was a high eminence, the top of Pisgah on Mount Nebo, in the mountains of Abarim. The earth had now ceased to own Moses, Israel also knew him no more, the wilderness too had all been passed, and the Lord alone is his company on the hill that overlooked the land of promise. What an expression of the place of the Church or heavenly glory, the whole of this is! On high with the Lord, Moses looks down on the earthly inheritance, the place of the tribes of Israel, Gilead and Dan, Naphtali, Ephraim and Manasseh, with all the land of Judah to the sea, the south too, and the valley of Jericho, with the city of Palm trees unto Zoar! A place that could command such objects beneath, and in such company, is heavenly indeed. Moses is on high with the Lord, looking on the cities and plains where the redeemed and happy families of the earth were to dwell. It is from heaven alone that such blessing and occupation of the earth, in righteousness and peace, will be seen by the Lord and His children of the resurrection. (We have also a witness to the heavenly glory of Aaron, Moses' associate. He dies as a priest on the top of the hill, the earthly people being beneath him, and knowing him only as a priest in the high places [Num. 20]).

And again as another witness of Moses in the heavenly place, we see him in the New Testament, on another mount, the Mount of the Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John are there, representing Israel and the earthly people; and they are on the outside. But Moses is there, again in company with the Lord and another co-heir of the heavenly glory, and they are within, enwrapped in the cloud of the excellent glory, the true veil that is to separate the holy place from the courts, or the heavens from the earth. Moses is on the heavenly side of that veil, glorified in the likeness of the very Lord of the glory Himself.

These are two strong and clear testimonies to the heavenly glory of Moses - striking exhibition of him in the heavenly place, being in company with the Lord on the top of two hills, from the one of which he sees the earthly inheritance beneath him, and from the other, the earthly people outside

him. And thus I judge from all these witnesses which we have listened to, we gather both the heavenly calling and glory, or the heavenly character and place of this honored and faithful servant of God. A child of the resurrection he is, and a joint heir of God with Jesus Christ.

Thus does Moses lose the earth, but gains heaven. He loses Canaan by his own wrong, trespassing, as we have seen, against the grace and power of the budding rod; but he gains glory on the top of the hill that overlooked Canaan, through the abounding kindness and love of God his Savior. Law says that no man shall take advantage of his own wrong, and justly so; for righteousness forbids the thought that anyone shall gain a benefit by his own misdoing. But grace does not act by law, for the glory we reap through it, as pardoned sinners, is richer and brighter far than that which Adam in innocency knew. God's riddle is solved in our history - the eater has yielded meat, and the strong man sweetness. Moses and the Church both illustrate it; both are traveling onward through forfeiture of the earth, led by the hand of the Son of God, to the top of that hill which looks down on the goodly tents of Jacob beneath. O beloved, what manner of people should we be! May the life and energy of the indwelling Spirit keep us more and more separated to heavenly character and heavenly hopes!

The Motive for Christian Walk

Until we are at home in the glory, we must look above our path to be able to walk in it (Col. 3:2).

A Christian who has heaven before him, and a Savior in glory as the Object of his affections, will walk well upon the earth. He who has only the earthly path for his rule, will fail in the intelligence and motives needed to walk in it; he will become a prey to worldliness, and his Christian walk in the world will be more or less on a level with the world in which he walks.

The eyes upward on Jesus will keep the heart and steps in a path conformable to Jesus, and which, consequently, will glorify Him and make Him known in the world.

Seeing what we are, we must have a motive above our path to be able to walk in it. This does not prevent our needing also for our path the fear of the Lord to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, knowing that we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

Nadab and Abihu

Hardly had the echo of the shout of victory died away (Lev. 9) ere the elements of a spurious worship were prepared. Hardly had the divine position been assumed ere it was deliberately abandoned through neglect of the divine commandment. No sooner were those priests inaugurated than they grievously failed in the discharge of their priestly functions. And in what did their failures consist? Were they spurious priests? Were they mere pretenders? By no means. They were genuine sons of Aaron, true members of the priestly family, duly appointed priests. Their vessels of ministry and their priestly garments too would seem to have been all right. What then was their sin? Did they stain the curtains of the tabernacle with human blood? or pollute the sacred precincts with some crime which shocks the moral sense? We have no proof of their having done so. Their sin was this: They "offered strange fire before the LORD, which He commanded them not" (Lev. 10:1). Here was their sin. They departed in their worship from the plain word of Jehovah, who had fully and plainly instructed them as to the mode of their worship.

We have already alluded to the divine fullness and sufficiency of the word of the Lord in reference to every branch of priestly service. There was no room left for man to introduce what he might deem desirable or expedient. "This is the thing which the LORD commanded" was quite sufficient. It made all very plain and very simple. Nothing was needed on man's part save a spirit of implicit obedience to the divine command; but herein they failed. Man has always proved himself ill-disposed to walk in the narrow path of strict adherence to the plain word of God. The bypath has ever seemed to present resistless charms to the poor human heart. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." Pro. 9:17. Such is the enemy's language; but t h e lowly, obedient heart knows full well that the path of subjection to the Word of God is the only one that leads to "waters" that are really "sweet," or to "bread" that can rightly be called "pleasant." Nadab and Abihu might have deemed one kind of "fire" as good as another, but it was not their province to decide as to that. They should have acted according to the word of the Lord, but instead of this, they took their own way and reaped the awful fruits thereof. "He knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell." v. 18.

"And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD." How deeply solemn! Jehovah was dwelling in the midst of His people to govern, to judge, and to act according to the claims of His nature. At the close of chapter 9 we read, "And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat." This was Jehovah's acceptance of a true sacrifice, but in chapter 10 it is His judgment upon erring priests. It is a double action of the same fire.

The burnt offering went up as a sweet odor, the "strange fire" was rejected as an abomination. The Lord was glorified in the former, but it would have been a dishonor to accept the latter. Divine grace accepted and delighted in that which was a type of Christ's most precious sacrifice; divine holiness rejected that which was the fruit of man's corrupt will - a will never more hideous and abominable than when active in the things of God.

The Name of Jesus: the Power and Value

It is truly edifying to trace, through the New Testament, the varied virtues of the name of Jesus. We shall just refer to a few passages.

There is salvation in the name of Jesus. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12. The soul that trusts in the name of Jesus, gets all the saving virtue which belongs to that name.

There is eternal life in the name of Jesus. "These [things] are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." John 20:31. The soul that simply trusts in the name of Jesus, becomes a partaker of His life; and that life can never be forfeited, because it is eternal.

3) There is remission of sins through the name of Jesus. "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10:43. The soul that simply trusts in the name of Jesus, is forgiven, according to the value of that name, in God's judgment. It matters not what or who he may be that comes to God in the name of Jesus, he gets all the credit, all, the value, all the virtue, of that name, and could no more be rejected than the One in whose name he comes. If I go into a bank with a wealthy and trustworthy man's name on a check, I enter in all the confidence which his wealth and credit can give. It matters not what or who I am; I come in his name. Thus it is with a sinner who comes to God in the name of Jesus.

4) The name of Jesus is the power of prayer. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." John 14:13, 14. The believer, coming to God in the name of Jesus, could no more be refused than Jesus Himself.

The name of Jesus gives power over Satan and over all manner of evil. "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Mark 16:17, 18. (See also Acts 3:6; 16:18; Jas. 5:14.) It may be said that this power is no longer available. I reply, we are merely tracing, through the New Testament, the power and value of the name of Jesus. That name has power in heaven, power on earth, power in hell, power over angels, power over men, power over devils. Let faith use that precious, matchless, powerful, all-prevailing name.

God's assembly, wherever it is, is gathered in the name of Jesus. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. 18:20. Observe, it does not say, "where two or three meet." Men may meet upon any ground, or for any object they please; but the Holy Spirit only can gather unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

7) The name of Jesus will be the object of universal and everlasting homage. "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 [those] in heaven, and things [those] in earth, and things [those] under the earth." Phil. 2:9, 10.

May God the Holy Ghost unfold to our souls more of the power and value of the name of Jesus, so that we may more fully know what we have in Him, and be enabled to use His name in more holy confidence at all times, under all circumstances, and for all purposes.

The New Year's Text

A very dear Christian lady was suffering from much weakness; and as the New Year approached, she was sad and depressed.

For many years she had sought and received a New Year's text from the Lord; and now, once more, the dear Christian lifted up her heart to her faithful God who had been her stay so many years.

As she committed herself into His hands before she fell asleep, she breathed out this simple, childlike prayer:

"Give me, O Lord, a word from Thyself to comfort me in the New Year." Immediately the words came to her:

"Run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus" all the way, for "the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." (Heb. 12:1, 2; Deut. 11:12.)

She arose, cheered and encouraged in her God; and when her friends came to see her, she was delighted to tell them of the Lord's goodness to her, saying, after she had ended her little story,

"There now! Must not that have been the Holy Spirit who brought these texts to my mind? I am sure I could never have thought of them myself, and you know it was the very word I needed. The Lord has just told me to run with patience the race He has set before me."

The Night of Weeping

"O My God, I cry... in the night season, and am not silent" (Psalm 22:2).

In that memorable night of Israel's first Passover, there arose a great cry throughout the land of Egypt such as had never been heard before, nor should be heard again (Exod. 11:6; 12:30).

The mansions of the great and the hovels of the poor were alike filled with the sobs and bitter groans of the bereaved. All the families of the great empire mourned in concert for their first-born sons, taken from them by a single stroke. The darkness of the night of judgment became resonant with a wailing for which there was no relief.

The name Bochim ("weepers," Judg. 2:5) might well have been applied to the land of Egypt, for at midnight the haughty kingdom had suddenly been transformed into a nation of weepers. It was due to one proud man fighting against God and resisting His will.

Pharaoh, by his stubborn resistance to the will of Jehovah, had brought this lamentation and woe to his subjects. Proudly and persistently the great potentate had defied the Omnipotent of the heavens, saying, in effect, Not Thy will, but mine be done. He refused to free Israel, the first-born of God, from their bondage, well knowing and yet daring the dreadful alternative for the first-born of Egypt. Hence, through man's obstinate self-will, the hope and promise of a mighty nation perished in that night of weeping.

Leaving Egypt and its smitten households, let us draw near to Gethsemane and the Man of Sorrows. In Olivet's garden another midnight hour of grief rises ever and again before us. From thence come to us the cries of the Strong Man in His "agony" and His sweat of blood.

It is not now a myriad of grief-stricken voices rising from among the architectural glories of the dwellers on the Nile. In the quietude of the garden retreat outside the city, we hear one single voice, quivering from inward anguish in the fervency of its supplication, offering up with strong crying and tears that prayer of prayers, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Matt. 26:39:

What a night of weeping was this! There in the loneliness of Gethsemane's garden, the blessed Savior and Lord became sorely troubled and very sorrowful, even unto death. There He fell upon His face, knowing fully what the morrow would bring forth for Him.

There His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. Thrice the perfect Man and Holy Son of God cried aloud in the night season to His Father, and was "not silent": "Take away this cup from Me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (Mark 14:36).

A stone's cast away are the sleeping disciples. But, beloved reader, let us not sleep as do others. Let us watch with Him one hour, even now. Let the privacy of our own hearts be the Gethsemane of our souls. There let us kneel with Him. There let us mingle our tears with His. There let us gaze

with holy horror upon the dreadful cup, brimming with our sins and God's wrath, so soon to be drained on Calvary's cross. Let us seek to have what fellowship we may with the Lover of our souls in His great sorrow.

In Gethsemane's night of weeping, we hear the cries, not of the disobedient and rebellious, smitten for their sins, as in Egypt, but the anguish of the obedient Man, viewing His coming cross and death in the light of His own Omniscience.

His strong crying and tears were unto Him who was able to save Him out of death. And in this dread appeal the Son, though the cup did not pass from Him until He drank it (Matt. 26:42; John 18:11), was heard because of His piety (Heb. 5:7; J.N.D. Trans.). On the third day He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.

After sorrow comes rejoicing. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Psalm 30:5. The noonday darkness of Calvary exceeded the midnight darkness of Gethsemane; nevertheless, there was beyond both a morning without a cloud or a pang - the morning of resurrection and heavenly glory. Here, darkness and tears; there, no night, no tears, neither sorrow nor sighing.

"Hark! what sounds of bitter weeping,

What submissive anguish deep!

'Tis the Lord His vigil keeping,

While His followers sink in sleep.

Ah, my soul, He loved thee;

Yes, He gave Himself for me.

"He is speaking to His Father,

Tasting deep that bitter cup;

Yet He takes it, willing rather

For our sakes to drink it up.

With what love He loved me;

Gave Himself, my soul, for thee.

"Then His closing scene of anguish!

All God's waves and billows roll

Over Him, there left to languish

On the cross, to save my soul.

Matchless love, how vast, how free!

Jesus gave Himself for me.

"Hark again! His cries are waking
Echoes on dark Calvary's hill;
God, My God, art Thou forsaking
Him who always did Thy will?
Ah, my soul, it was for thee,
Yes, He gave Himself for me."

No Cause for Envy

"Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord." Rom. 16:12.

See what lovely discrimination is here! Why does he not class all three together? The reason is plain, because two had only labored, while the third had labored much. Each one gets his or her place, according to what they were, and according to what they had done. Nor would Tryphena and Tryphosa have had any cause for envy and jealousy against Persis because she was characterized as "beloved," while they were not, or because the word "much" was added to her labors and withheld from theirs. Ah! no; envy and jealousy are the pernicious fruit of a miserable self-occupation. They can find no part in a heart wholly devoted to Christ and His glorious interests.

Occupation With Christ: Part 1

The subject on which I would meditate a little is wider than is suggested by the scripture read. Here we have eating "the flesh of the Son of man, and drink[ing] His blood," and "eat[ing]" Christ Himself; but I desire to consider the whole subject of feeding upon or occupation with Christ. Combining, then, other scriptures with this, we are said to feed upon Christ in three characters: as the passover Lamb, as the manna, and as the old corn of the land; for I need scarcely say that all these three things are types of Christ. In the chapter before us we have especially Christ as the manna (vv. 32, 33, 48-50, etc.); and a reference to Him also as the pass over Lamb (compare verse 4 with verse 53, etc.); but we shall have to turn to the epistles to find Him in the character which answers to the old corn of the land (Josh. 5:11).

1) We will first take Christ as the passover Lamb, as the food of His people. If we go back to the history of Israel, we shall find that they kept the Passover in Egypt (Ex. 12); in the wilderness (Num. 9); and in the land (Josh. 5). The question then arises, When do we feed upon Christ as the passover Lamb? It is sometimes said that we only do this at the outset, when, convicted of sin, we fear the approach of God as a judge; and that, as soon as we have deliverance, we thereafter cease to feed upon Him in this character. If this be so, why does Israel keep the Passover both in the wilderness and in the land? I think, therefore, that it will be seen that we never cease to keep the Passover; and, moreover, that the place in which we thus feed upon Christ depends upon our states of soul.

Every believer knows what it is (has known what it is) to feed upon the roast Lamb in Egypt. Awakened by the Spirit of God, alarmed by the impending judgment, brought under the shelter of the precious blood, how eagerly we fed upon the Lamb that had passed through the fires of God's holiness, when bearing our sins on the tree! True, it was with bitter herbs that we ate it, for we then had a sight of our sins - in measure according to God - and with girded loins and shoes on our feet, and our staff in our hand, for already Egypt had become morally a desert, and we were only waiting for the word of the Lord to commence our pilgrim journey. It was a time much to be remembered, for it was the beginning of months - the first month of the year of our spiritual life.

But while every believer has passed through this experience, it is to be feared that many feed upon the roast lamb in Egypt all their lives. Not knowing deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ, or even peace with God as the result of the sheltering blood, they feed upon Christ only as the One who by His death bars the way to God as a judge; and consequently they do not know God as their God and Father in Christ Jesus. Such a state of soul is both to be deprecated and deplored; for it is the result either of bad teaching, or of the unbelief of the heart in the fullness of the grace of God.

Passing now from Egypt, the next place in which Israel kept the Passover was the wilderness; and they were told to keep it there "according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof" (Numb. 9:3). The wilderness is the place of every believer when viewed as a pilgrim. The world has become a desert to him, and he is passing through (as not of) it, because he is waiting

for the return of his Lord. How then does he feed upon Christ as the slain Lamb in the wilderness? "It is participation by grace in the power of the death and resurrection of Christ," by which we have been brought out of the enemy's territory - delivered from the power of Satan and redeemed unto God.

In the wilderness we feed upon the Passover as the memorial of our deliverance from Egypt; and in it we see Christ going down into death, and not only bearing all the judgment that was our due - going through and exhausting it - but also as meeting and conquering all the power of the enemy - destroying him that had the power of death, and thereby bringing us out from the house of bondage, and setting us free as the children, and for the service, of God. In the wilderness, therefore, we feed upon the passover Lamb as pilgrims and strangers - knowing deliverance, but not as yet come to the land of which the Lord has spoken. Hence in this character we not only value (according to our faith) the precious blood, and delight to contemplate its wondrous efficacy as clearing us forever from every charge and claim of the enemy, but we also feed upon the death of Christ as such because of our death (and resurrection) in Him, by which we have been brought out into a new place, where we can look back upon death and judgment as being forever behind us.

In the land the Passover assumed another character still, and one too which should also find its correspondence with the believer now. It is very evident that to the Israelite it would have a much fuller significance when he was across the Jordan than when he was in the desert. It would be to him now the memorial - not simply of deliverance from Egypt and Egypt's thralldom and power, but of accomplished salvation. For in truth his position in the land, while it was to the glory of God's faithfulness and grace in the performance of all that He had promised (for "there failed not aught of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" [Josh. 21:45]), was the consequence of the shed blood. In other words, the blood of the passover lamb laid the foundation for the accomplishment of God's purposes; and hence to those whose eyes were opened, the blood would have a far greater value when over the Jordan than when in the waste, howling wilderness.

So now, for we have a position which agrees entirely with being in the land. Not only have we been quickened together with Christ, but we are also raised up together, and made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). This is the place before God of every believer; but whether we are occupying it depends upon whether we know death and resurrection with, as well as in and through, Christ - whether we have crossed the Jordan as well as the Red Sea. It is our privilege to do so; indeed we ought never to be content until, by the grace of God, we do know what it is to be seated in spirit in the heavenly places. But if we are there, we cannot dispense with the Passover.

On the other hand, the more fully we apprehend the character of the place into which we are brought, the more the riches of the grace of God are unfolded to us, the more delightedly, and with enlarged apprehensions, we shall look back to the cross, and feast upon the death of Him whose precious blood alone has made our place in the heavenlies possible for us. But our feeding upon Him now will partake more of the character of communion with God in the death of His Son. Our eyes will then be opened to discover, not so much the blessings which have thereby been secured to us, as that God in every attribute of His character has been fully glorified in that death. We shall

thus (if we may so speak) feast with God when we keep the Passover in the heavenly places; and the effect on our souls will be adoration and praise; in a word, worship of the highest character will be the result of our feeding upon the slain Lamb when seated in the heavenlies. For we are seated there in peace before God - already in possession of our place in His presence. And it is only then that we can have communion with His own thoughts, and with His own joy in the death of His Son.

We see, therefore, that we feed upon Christ as the passover Lamb in every stage of our experience; but the place in which we do so - Egypt, the wilderness, or the land- will depend upon our states of soul. And, no doubt, when we are gathered together to show the Lord's death until He come, there are often side-by-side those who are in the wilderness, and those who are in the land. Still they feed alike upon the death of Christ, remember Him as dead, whatever the difference in their apprehensions, or in their experiences or attainments. In heaven itself, indeed, we shall contemplate that death with ever increasing adoration; for the blood of the Lamb will be the theme of glorified saints throughout eternity.

Occupation With Christ: Part 2

2) Christ as the manna is also the food of His people. The manna differs from the roast lamb, in that it was confined to the wilderness. It was not until Israel had been brought through the Red Sea that the manna was given (see Ex. 16); and it "ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna anymore; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." Josh. 5:12. It was, therefore, the wilderness food of Israel; and in like manner Christ, as the manna, is the wilderness food for the believer. But a distinction has to be made. Inasmuch as the history of Israel, passing through the desert, crossing the Jordan, and occupying the land, is typical, they could only be in one place at a time. The believer is at the same moment in the wilderness and in the heavenlies. For service, for the expression of Christ down here, viewed as a pilgrim, waiting for the return of the Lord, he is in the desert; his position before God, as united to a glorified Christ, is ever in the heavenly places - whether he occupies it, is another question. Hence, supposing him to know his place, he needs the manna and the old corn at the same time. In other words, he needs to feed upon Christ in both aspects. He is never in Egypt, whatever his experiences; for that would be to deny the truth of his deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ. A quickened soul may be in Egypt, but a believer--meaning by this term one who has been brought into the true Christian place by the indwelling Spirit - has done forever with Egypt, for the world has become to him a moral wilderness; and it is as being in the wilderness that he feeds upon Christ as the manna.

What then is the manna for the believer? It is Christ in incarnation - a humbled Christ. "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." John 6:32, 33. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:49-51. Christ is thus the manna in all that He was in the flesh - in the expression of what He was both as the revealer of the Father and as the perfect Man. His grace, compassion, tenderness, and love - His meekness and lowliness of heart--His patience, forbearance, and long-suffering--His example--all these things are found in the manna which God has given to us for food during our sojourn in the wilderness.

He is continually presented to us in the manna character in those epistles which especially deal with the desert path of the saint. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Heb. 12:1-3. That is, we are exhorted to feed upon Christ as the manna to sustain us amid the trials, difficulties, and

persecutions incident to the desert. In like manner Peter, who writes particularly "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus," etc., continually leads us to Christ in this aspect. "What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps:..." 1 Peter 1:1; 2:20-24 (see also chap. 3:17, 18). The Apostle Paul too feeds the saints with manna. For example, though it contains more, we have it in Phil. 2:5-9 - manna, we might say, of the most precious character. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." But it is in the gospels that the manna lies gleaming round us on every side, and where it is to be gathered for use as the needs of each day may require. For there it is that we have the unfoldings of the wondrous life - the life of Him who was the perfect Man, and, at the same time, God manifest in flesh.

Two remarks, however, may be made as to the collecting and use of the manna. The Israelites went out of the camp to gather at a certain rate every day (Exod. 16:4). We must go down for the same purpose. That is, unless we know our place in the heavenlies, and in truth, what it is to feed upon the old corn of the land, we shall scarcely be able to feed upon the manna. This is remarkably brought in in the Apostle Paul's ministry; he began with Christ in glory. So must it be with us. When we know our union with a glorified Christ, our place in Him before God, we shall feast with intensified delight upon Christ as the manna. Historically, the manna came before the old corn, but the order should be reversed for the believer - for the simple reason that God has so reversed it in the presentation of Christ to our souls. We preach, as Paul did, a Christ in glory; and when He is thus apprehended, then, and not until then, we can find in a humbled Christ our food while in the wilderness. Hence the great loss and consequent weakness of those who are never permitted to hear of Christ in glory - whose only thought of Him is as once dwelling down here in the flesh, when He was made in the likeness of man.

The second remark is the very obvious and often repeated one, that the manna cannot be stored for use. Everyone must gather it every day according to his eating (Exod. 16:16); and if he gather more - unless it be for "the sabbath" - it will surely become corrupt. No, beloved friends, there must be the constant feeding upon Christ, day by day and hour by hour; and we can never receive more than our need for the moment requires. Thereby we are kept in continual dependence, and our eyes are ever directed to Christ. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me,.. shall live by Me." John 6:57.

3) There remains to be considered Christ as the old corn of the land. In the passage already referred to (Josh. 5:10-12), we have the Passover, the manna, and the old corn mentioned together; and this fact makes the interpretation the more manifest. If therefore the manna is Christ in incarnation, the old corn, inasmuch as the land typifies the heavenly places, of necessity points to Christ in glory. And we shall find that He is so presented to us in the epistles as the sustenance and strength of our souls, and so presented as our proper nourishment, even though believers may be regarded in the epistle, not, as in the Ephesians, as seated in the heavenlies in Christ, but as in Colossians and Philippians (and, indeed, in 2 Corinthians), as down here upon the earth; for though still down here, they are united to Him where He is.

Take Colossians first. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection [have your mind] on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Chap. 3:1-3. Here, it is true, we have "those things which are above"; but it is evident that by this term is meant the whole sphere of blessing of which Christ in glory is the center - the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in fact, into the possession of which we are brought, and all of which are summed up in Christ. These therefore are "the old corn of the land," "the fruit of the land of Canaan," the proper food and sustenance for those who have died, and are risen with Christ.

In Philippians 3 we have the same truth brought before us. For what have we there but a glorified Christ as filling the vision of the Apostle's soul, and as the satisfying portion of his heart? Thus if we have the manna in chapter 2, we most surely have the old corn of the land in chapter 3. One more instance may be cited - 2 Cor. 3:18: "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Hence too the value of the constant expectation of Christ. It attracts us to the Person of the glorified Christ, engages our hearts with Him, and fills our souls with longing desires for that time when we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

All these passages, and many more of a kindred character, direct us to Christ in glory as the old corn of the land; but this is food with which we cannot dispense; no other will so nourish or impart such strength to the saint. It is heavenly food for heavenly people, and it is only when we are feeding upon it that we can be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might - that we can make war with the enemy for the possession (the occupation) of our inheritance - that we are made willing to undergo anything and everything - fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, being made conformable unto His death, if in any way we may arrive at the resurrection from among the dead (Phil. 3), when we shall be glorified together with Him who has been the strength and sustenance of our souls.

It should be remarked too that there is no power to express Christ in our walk down here excepting as we are occupied with Him in glory. He should thus be, in this character, ever before us; and He will be when, taught of the Spirit, we can say to Him, All our springs, all the sources of joy, are in Thee. And He Himself desires this; for He said to His disciples, when speaking of the coming Spirit of truth; "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:14, 15.

Occupation with Christ is, therefore, the Alpha and the Omega of the Christian life; occupation with His death- that death which laid the foundation not only of our own redemption and deliverance, but also of the reconciliation of all things - occupation with Him in incarnation, when, though He were the Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, when, as the obedient and dependent Man, He found His meat in doing the Father's will and in finishing. His work and thus glorified God in every detail of that wondrous life; and, above all, occupation with Him in the glory, as the glorified Man, the center of all God's counsels, and the object of all His delight, yea, the satisfying portion of His heart. It is thus by occupation with, feeding upon, contemplating Christ, that we are brought in the power of the Spirit into fellowship with God - enabled to enter into His own thoughts concerning, and even to share His own affections for, that blessed One who is now

seated at His own right hand. Surely here then is the source of all growth, strength, and blessing!

Blessed Lord Jesus! keep Thyself so constantly before our souls, and so unfold Thyself in all Thy grace and beauty to our hearts, that, drawing out our affections, we may desire to have nothing, to see nothing, and to know nothing but Thyself; for in Thee dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and we are complete in Thee (Col. 2:9, 10).

Our Joy in Heaven: Luke 9:28-36

Luke 9:28-36

Let us look a little at this scripture, as showing what our joy in the glory will consist of. We have the warrant of 2 Pet. 1:16 for saying that the scene represents to us the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is what we wait for. Our souls are not in a healthy state unless we are waiting for God's Son from heaven. 'The Church is not regulated in its hopes by the Word and Spirit of God, unless it is looking for Him as Savior from heaven (Phil. 3). And this passage, as disclosing to us specially what will be our portion when He comes, is important to us in this respect. There are many other things in the passage, such as the mutual relations of the earthly and the heavenly people in the kingdom. These it may be very instructive to consider; but this is not our present purpose, which is to consider what light is here afforded on the nature of that joy which we shall inherit at and from the coming of the Lord. Other scriptures, such as the promises to those who overcome in Revelation 2 and 3, and the description of the heavenly city in Revelation 21 and 22, give us instructions on the same subject; but let us now particularly look at the scene on the holy mount.

"And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening." It was when Jesus was in the acknowledgment of dependence-"as He prayed" - that this change took place. This, then, is the first thing we have here - a change such as will pass upon the living saints when Jesus comes.

"And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias." They were with Him. And this will be our joy; we shall be with Jesus. In 1 Thessalonians 4, after stating the order in which the resurrection of the sleeping, and the change of the living, saints will take place, and that we shall both be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, all that the Apostle says as to what shall ensue is, "and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

But in this passage there is not only the being with Christ, but there is also familiar intercourse with Him. "There talked with Him two men." It is not that He talked with them, though this was no doubt true; but this might have been, and they be at a distance. But when we read that they talked with Him, we get the idea of the most free and familiar intercourse. Peter and the others knew what it was to have such intercourse with Jesus in humiliation; and what joy must it have been to have the proof that such intercourse with Him would be enjoyed in glory!

And then it is said by Luke that they "appeared in glory." But this is secondary to what we have been considering. We are told that they were with Him, and then that they appeared in glory. They share in the same glory as that in which He was manifested. And so as to us. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast

loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."

But there is another thing still. We are not only told that they were with Him, that they talked with Him, and appeared in glory with Him, but we are also privileged to know the subject of their conversation. They "spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." It was the cross which was the theme of their conversation in the glory - the sufferings of Christ which He had to accomplish at Jerusalem. And surely this will be our joy throughout eternity, when in glory with Christ- to dwell upon this theme, His decease accomplished at Jerusalem.

We next read that Peter and they that were with Him were heavy with sleep. It shows us what the flesh is in the presence of the glory of God. Peter made a great mistake; but I pass on.

"While He thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him." Peter tells us that this voice came from the excellent glory. "For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Now Peter and the others had entered into the cloud; and thus we get the wonderful fact that in the glory, from which the voice comes, saints are privileged to stand, and there, in that glory, share the delight of the Father in His beloved Son. Not only are we called to the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ, we are called to have fellowship with the Father. We are admitted of God the Father to partake of His satisfaction in His beloved Son.

"And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone." The vision all gone - the cloud, the voice, the glory, Moses and Elias; but Jesus was left, and they were left to go on their way with Jesus, knowing Him now in the light of those scenes of glory which they had beheld. And this is the use to us of those vivid apprehensions of spiritual things which we may sometimes realize. It is not that we can be always enjoying them and nothing else. But when for the season they have passed away, like this vision on the holy mount, they leave us alone with Jesus, to pursue the path of our pilgrimage with Him in spirit now, and with Him in the light and power of that deepened acquaintance with Him, and fellowship of the Father's joy in Him, that we have got on the mount; and thus to wait for the moment of His return, when all this, and more than our hearts can think of, shall be fulfilled to us forever.

Glory supreme is there,

Glory that shines through all,

More precious still that love to share

As those that love did call.

Like Jesus in that place

Of light and love supreme;

Once Man of sorrows full of grace,

Heaven's blest and endless theme.

Like Him! O grace supreme!
Like Him before Thy face,
Like Him to know that glory beam
Unhindered, face to face!
O love supreme and bright,
Good to the feeblest heart,
That gives us now, as heavenly light,
What soon shall be our part.

Our Trials: God's Object

Ah! has Christ ever touched the quick of your soul in solitude? Do you know the exquisite tenderness of His touch? He does not tear and lacerate. The necessities and trials of saints down here are created by God in order to show them what Christ is for them.

If I have taken Him as Lord, I do not expect an easy way. God never meant us to have it as disciples. He takes us into a rough path to show what Christ is, and that in it His grace may be able to vent itself. There is a yearning in His heart up there to let this grace be displayed in a poor, needy people down here—a longing that His strength should be made perfect in their weakness.

Do you know for yourself the grace of that living Christ? Do you know what Christ has to do with you, and you with Him? Do you know yourself as one of a flock that belongs to Him, and that He is tending and guarding through the wilderness, and carrying on to glory to be forever with Himself?

That Peerless Name

Some time ago a company of men were waiting in a public hall, and to while away the time they began to sing popular songs. Among them was a Christian who would not join in the singing of his unsaved companions. Seeing this, one man leaned over and said,

"Can't you sing?"

"Oh, yes," said our friend, "but only what my mother used to teach me." A shout of laughter went round the room, and he was asked,

"What is that?"

"Listen," he said, and then he sang the well known words,

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

In a believer's ear!

It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds

And drives away his fear."

A look of surprise was seen on the faces of the men, and some of them joined in the singing. The Christian, with a face full of joy, showed his delight in the theme-that peerless name-its sweetness was very real to him.

Again he sang,

"It makes the wounded spirit whole,

it calms the troubled breast;

'Tis manna to the hungry soul,

And to the weary, rest."

The fire of that song seemed to stir up the emotions of those men who had joined in the singing, their voices increasing in volume, the Christian entering into all the wondrous love of Him who "healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3).

Once more the glory and sweetness of that name filled the room as the words rang out,

"Blest name! the rock on which we build,

Our shield and hiding place;

Our never failing treasury, filled

With boundless stores of grace."

The singer, conscious that his feet were on the Rock, and that he was hidden in the cleft of that Rock, was enjoying communion with his Lord, and praise and worship seemed to flow out as he continued to sing,

"Jesus! our Savior, Shepherd, Friend,
Thou Prophet, Priest, and King;
Our Lord, our Life, our Way, our End,
Accept the song we bring."

The presence of that blessed Person seemed to be very real-the Savior who died to save us-the Shepherd who sought and found us-the Friend who never leaves us-the Prophet who unfolds all the wonders of God's love-the Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us-the King of glory, with whom His own shall dwell forever.

The next verse was sung in a subdued voice,

"Weak is the effort of our heart,
And cold our warmest thought;
But when we see Thee as Thou art,
We'll praise Thee as we ought."

This seemed almost too much for the men as they realized how fully the Christian entered into the words he sang. The last verse rang out loud and clear,

"Till then we would Thy love proclaim
With every fleeting breath;
And triumph in Thy blessed Name
Which quells the power of death."

The song finished; there was a tense silence for some moments. Then one, a professional singer, rose and stretched out his hand to the Christian, saying,

"Shake hands, sir. I am not religious, but I do admire a man who has the courage of his convictions."

This gave our friend a good opportunity to tell out the glad tidings of salvation. One man present who was a Christian, said to the singer afterward,

"How did you do it? I should have been terrified."

"I do not think you would," he replied, "if you thought of the Lord Jesus, who He is and what He has done for us; you would feel as if you must speak of Him."

Dear fellow believer, let us ask ourselves what we are doing with the opportunities which the Lord gives us to show to others that we belong to Him. We may not be called upon to

witness for Him in public, but if we are in the enjoyment of His love, we shall be constrained to speak of Him. Surely we can tell of the One who is our Savior, Shepherd, Friend, and point the unsaved to Him who not only can save them from sin and its power, but can fully satisfy the longings of their hearts.

Providence Is Not Faith

Providence is often alleged as a reason for not walking by faith. Never was there a more remarkable Providence than that which placed Moses in the court of Pharaoh, and it gained its object. It would not have done so if Moses had not later abandoned the position into which that Providence had brought him. But it was faith and not Providence as a rule and motive, which produced the effect for which Providence had preserved and prepared him. Providence (thanks be to God!) governs circumstances; faith governs the heart and the conduct.

Notes on Psalm 16

We know from Acts 2 that this psalm is the language of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is essentially a psalm connected with the path of a dependent man through this world. To us it is indeed a wonderful privilege to be put into the same path, and in our little measure to be called upon to have some of the same experiences which the blessed Lord, as a man, down here upon earth, passed through. Now it is a great thing to bear in mind that we never find the Lord Jesus acting other than in obedience to His Father. He never did a single thing for Himself. His was a life of ceaseless activity. He was always doing good, yet never doing anything for Himself.

We might think that sometimes He might legitimately have done something for Himself - in the temptation, for instance. The Lord passed through the temptation of the enemy as a dependent man. He would not move out of the path of dependence. He does not swerve from that path, even though He was in need in this case, because He had not a word from His Father. He would rather suffer hunger, and wait until God's time to be fed.

If He had not gone through His path in this way, He could not have been our example. If by His Godhead power He had made the stones into bread, He would not have been an example to us, because, of course, we could not exercise the same power.

The beautiful thing is, that the Lord Jesus, as a man, in going through this world, found all His springs in God, and thus expressed His dependence.

The youngest saint may learn something from the dependence of the Lord Jesus Christ upon God. The Lord had all His strength in God. Is it not a great thing? Oh, the blessedness of depending upon God, like the Lord Jesus Christ, in a world like this!

This psalm is expressive of the Lord's experiences all through His journey here. In other psalms we get the utterances of the Lord in eventful moments of His life.

In Psalm 22, for instance, we get some wonderful utterances of our Lord. We can here learn what we could not get from the gospels, and that is what was in the mind of the Lord in those hours of suffering and silence upon the cross. We have the record of but seven little sentences that fell from His lips; but what was passing in His heart at that moment of unutterable sorrow and weakness? He tells us Himself. He says, as it were, "If God has forsaken Me, I have not forsaken Him." His whole trust in that moment was in God. He was then suffering that which it would have taken us an eternity in the lake of fire to endure. No creature could possibly pass through that and survive. Yet the Lord rises again, and rises in the power of an endless life.

What passed through the mind of the Lord in that midnight hour in the garden, when we are told, He was "sore amazed"? (Mark 14:33.) The word is "affrighted," as in chapter 16:5. He had the cross with all its horrors before Him. He looked for some to take compassion, but found none. The most intimate of His disciples were fast asleep. What was He passing through at that time? I believe Psalm 102 gives the answer. Hebrews 1 furnishes the divine interpretation of this psalm. It

says in Psalm 102:23, "He weakened My strength in the way; He shortened My days." He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. Messiah was "cut off," as we find in Dan. 9:26, margin. He who had all the promises was cut off in the midst of His days, without receiving what as Messiah He had every right to.

The answer to His cry is in verse 24, where, in the middle of the verse, we now get another speaker. Jehovah answers Him: "Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end." What an answer to one who was there in anguish of spirit.

But, as I said, Psalm 22 and 102, and other psalms, give us the experiences of the Lord Jesus Christ at certain eventful moments of His history; while Psalm 16 describes the pathway of the Lord Jesus from the beginning to the end.

This psalm was true of the Lord in all the experiences He had to pass through. He was relying upon God, no matter what the trials and difficulties might be. As a man He looks to God, and finds His strength and comfort in Him. Is that impossible to us? No, it is the very thing we are called to do. Because we find that we are as weak as water, there is all the more need for dependence. We need never be afraid of our weakness. What we may be afraid of is our imaginary strength. The moment we think we have got anything, then it is that we break down. But it is true blessedness to have our hearts and eyes continually turning toward God.

But you may say, How am I going to get through all today? The way to get on is to cry, "Preserve me, O God." Well, you may say, We cannot keep upon our knees all the daylong; how can we go on in that way? It is that attitude of heart toward God that turns toward Him and says, I cannot get on without Thee. It is a continual turning of the heart to Him, and finding that you cannot get on without Him.

When you think of the Lord in Luke's Gospel, He is there presented as the Son of man. You get the human side of the Lord, and so you find Him frequently in prayer Himself; and He presses the necessity of prayer upon His disciples. You will find that prayer has a prominent place in Luke. It is in the Gospel of Luke that Christ says to His disciples that men ought always to pray and not to faint; and many other passages there are which refer to prayer. The Lord, as a dependent man, is found there continually in prayer. His trust was in God at all times. Well, if the soul is thus, what can shake it?

It would be well worth your while to go through the Psalms, and mark with your pencil the word "trust." The blessedness of trusting in the Lord! It is a word that is continually appearing right through. People very often speak about trusting in the Lord. But at the very first difficulty they throw themselves upon their own resources. But how different it was with the Lord. He went through all in peace and restfulness of heart, and it was because He put His trust in What the Lord Jesus had in this world is as real for us as God. it was for Him, and we can say this confidently and reverently. Do we know the blessedness of the Lord being the portion of our inheritance, and of our cup? I have often heard people say, I have none but the Almighty to look to. Well, dear friends, how much has the soul got who has only the Lord to look to? He has everything. It is a wonderful

thing to see the Lord going through the world in calmness of spirit, owing to His having confidence in God.

There is nothing in the world for the Christian. All that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Is there a single thing there that can help you, that can forward you in your Christian course? If you have God, how thoroughly it makes you independent of the world! All the trials and sorrows that you have on the way should only serve to make you put your confidence in God.

Suppose a Christian has had a trial, and it is now all over; what has the trial left behind? what has been the effect of the trial upon him? Has it merely left a wound? Why, it ought to have left a big blessing behind it! We ought to have learned something about God that we never knew before; we ought to have gained by the trial, and to have proved what God is to us in it.

The Lord can speak of His path, and say, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places." In what sense could that be said? The Lord passed through trial and suffering here; what then could have made His lines pleasant? This is the secret-God was enough for His heart, Jehovah was His portion, His inheritance, and His cup. The Lord was during His whole journey moving, as it were, against a strong tide. He was never chafed in spirit, always calm, always dependent, and finding in God His resources. "I will bless the LORD [Jehovah], who hath given Me counsel." If you turn to Isa. 50:4, you will see the way in which He got counsel. The Lord Himself is speaking: "The Lord GOD hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned." His ear was open; He was ready to receive instruction. "The Lord GOD hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." There was the ear open! He was always ready to hear what Jehovah said. He got instruction and counsel from Jehovah. The hidden springs - the reins.

Where is that in us which answers to this? It is, I believe, what we get in the Old and New Testament - meditation. It is, I might say, like chewing the cud in animals. We read of meditation in the Psalms. It means that we are to go over things. It is not always hearing n e w truth. There may be a kind of attraction in learning n e w truth; but the thing that feeds the soul is its getting its portion from God - going oftentimes over what you have had before. The Lord could thus speak and say that His reins got instruction in the night seasons. It is a blessed thing.

I knew a dear saint of God who is now with the Lord. She used to say that she always suffered a great loss when she slept the whole night through. She said, I like to repeat the words of that hymn, "The Man of sorrows." You know there is a great difference in knowing a thing by heart, and in knowing a thing in the heart by meditation.

"I have set the LORD [Jehovah] always before Me." This gives quietness and peace; and, as we have said, the Lord Jesus was never put out by circumstances; and at the end of His journey He could say, "My peace I give unto you." It was the peace that possessed His own heart, even when things disappointed Him. He was in perfect peace; He was never put out by these things. Why not? Because He always looked up. Take that remarkable scene in Matthew 11. He sees nothing but rejection. The children of the world would have nothing of God, and nothing but rejection was

before Him. He could say, "I have labored in vain." It looked as if His mission was a failure; and yet He could say, "I thank Thee, O Father." Perfect submission to His Father's will; and let the circumstances be what they might, He was calm, and had peace amid them all. If it was according to the Father's will, He was happy and content. In

Luke we get, "Jesus rejoiced in spirit."

In verse 9 of this Psalm, and this is referred to in Acts 2, we read, "Therefore My heart is glad." When is it and of what is it said that the Lord was glad? Turn to Acts 2, and hear the connection; it is very wonderful: "Therefore did My heart rejoice, and My tongue was glad; moreover also My flesh shall rest in hope."

When you think that the Lord Jesus Christ, as a man, had certain promises made to Him - that as Messiah He had been promised length of days, even life for evermore, as well as royal estate and dominion, and many other things - what must it have been to Him to see nothing but the cross before Him here? Did He not value the promises made by God to Him? He did; yet He will wait God's time for their fulfillment.

In the end of Daniel 9 you read that the Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing. Yes. Instead of having the kingdom, He gets the cross; instead of having royal dominion, He is despised and cast out. What a strange fulfillment! (Do you say, a breakdown in the promises of God?) There was no breakdown, beloved friends. The Lord was lifted up as the Messiah, and cast down (Psalm 102:10). Did He not feel it? Do you mean to say that it had not cost the Lord something to be cut off? He did feel it. But what was the effect? It cast Him more upon God. Was not that a blessed thing? He can say, "Therefore My heart is glad." He says, as it were, "I have only to wait, for the promises are sure."

That is where our will comes in. We are expecting things to turn out in a certain way, and instead of their turning out in the way we expect, they turn out differently; and we do not know what to do. How different from the Lord! The Lord is content to wait until He gets the fulfillment of those promises to Himself, upon the sure and solid ground of resurrection. Are you willing to wait God's time? Can you not say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight"?

If death comes in, still the promises of God are sure. In the case of Abraham, after he had waited long years for that son to be a joy to him in fulfillment of the promises, God said to him one day, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering." Now the question is, What can Abraham do? God had said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." But what did Abraham do? He rose up early in the morning. He said, If I slay and burn him, God is able to raise him up. He might not see how, yet he knew that God was able to raise him up again. Would you be able thus to leave things you most value in God's hands? Well now, here was Isaac; and God says, "Offer him." It was on the third day that Abraham reached the appointed place. It was when the full period of death had elapsed that he got him back in a figure. But do you look beyond the grave? What a grand thing it is to know that the promises of God in Christ are Yea and Amen. What a blessed thing it is that we shall have in that day all these things in resurrection. Then can we truly say, "In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

May the Lord add His blessing to the word.

Psalm 22: a Brief Unfolding

The cry in this psalm is pre-eminently the cry of one forsaken of God. ("My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?") In this the psalm stands alone. Not, indeed, that we do not find other sufferings of our Lord in this psalm, but that which gives it its distinctness from all other psalms is this cry of abandonment. It is a cry to God, and that, as the psalm says, both when He was not heard, and when He was. Other psalms speak of Him as the perfect Man, the One who ever trusted in God; the sixteenth Psalm is specially His language as the trusting One; other psalms speak of His sufferings from His enemies, and what He endured at the hand of man; but in Psalm 22 it is not His enemies that are before us, though they are mentioned afterward, but it is Himself, His cry to God Himself.

It is that solemn moment with which nothing can be compared, when upon the cross He took up the whole question of sin before God; and good and evil were brought to an issue in the only Person that could resolve it.

It was atonement. Not that this alone appears in the psalm, but it is its first and deepest thought and truth. Indeed, the psalm shows that there was no sorrow that He knew not - no shame from which He was saved, nothing of wickedness on man's part lacking - surrounded by dogs and ravening lions, nay, man more cruel than all, baser than all, man alone guilty, though led on by a mightier rebel than himself. All this we find, but more wondrous and beyond all else, God was there, and there as the judge of sin. God was then forsaking Jesus because of sin. It is this with which the psalm opens. It is this verse which the Lord Jesus Himself singles out from the psalm, when He cries under God's abandonment upon the cross. God has given these words to us as the utterance of His own beloved One, when, in accomplishing that work which we need for eternity, He was made sin for us.

The Lord Jesus was not meeting Satan at the cross. He had met Satan after His baptism and had conquered him. He had acted upon this victory everywhere in His ministry. He, having bound the strong man, afterward spoiled his goods as He went about doing good. The Lord Jesus had also in Gethsemane, after His ministry was closed, passed through the conflict with Satan as the power of darkness. On the cross (in the three hours of darkness) it is neither Satan nor man. It is sin before God, and He who knew no sin, glorifying God as God about sin in death.

This was no question with His Father. He was ever the beloved Son in whom the Father was always well pleased, and never more so than on the cross. But sin is against God, and it is this He has taken up; and He goes through it before God in death. Our hearts delight in it, and rest in it. When God touches the question of sin, atonement is made. Atonement has two parts. It is expiation before God, and substitution for our sins. The latter is not the subject of our psalm. We find it in other psalms. Both are figured in the ritual for the day of atonement in Leviticus 16. There was Jehovah's lot, and Israel's lot - the blood of the sin offering carried in where God was, and the actual transgressions of the congregation confessed by Aaron on the head of the scape goat. The former is taken up in this psalm. It is the grand and most important part of atonement, where all is

important. It is Jehovah's lot - the expiation of sin before God. God is seen here in all the forms of His moral being, dealing with sin in the Person of One who is able to take it up and go through it all perfectly. Herein is the infinite grace of God - One who, when forsaken of God, had therein reached the very highest point in glorifying God. This is the meaning of the words, "Thou hast heard Me from the horns of the unicorns." Did the glory of His Person shelter Him from suffering? Not so. It was that which enabled Him to endure it, and to feel it all as none other could. The Lord felt everything perfectly. If there had been the smallest insensibility, it had not been perfection. In the cross sin was disposed of righteously, and forever, not by power, but by suffering. The Lord went through it all and was heard. "Thou hast heard Me from the horns of the unicorns." The answer was in resurrection. We find it in the next verse: "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren."

Death, and death alone, disposes of sin, so that the sinner, receiving the testimony to this perfect work of Christ, might be put absolutely without sin, as to his conscience, in the presence of God. Thus the work of Christ brings the soul to God - not only to the Father, but to God. Thus it is not merely love which is displayed, but in the cross we have also a foundation of righteousness. God is fully revealed as God. The atonement was not wrought before the Father as such. The work was before God, the work was about sin, and the result of the work is that the righteousness of God is declared. God having thus dealt with sin in atonement is the only firm footing for the soul; without this, all truth, and especially heavenly truth, will only elate the soul, or leave it a prey to Satan's delusions.

In the cross, the Lord Jesus as Son of man, glorified God when made sin. All through His life He glorified His Father. Even at twelve years of age we hear Him say, "Wilt ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" At His baptism we see how the Father cares for His glory- "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Not "hear ye Him" yet, for the time for this had not come; but He was always the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. And herein we see the evil of the teaching which speaks of the Lord as the sin-bearer in His life. If it could have been, He would not have been before the Father as the One in whom He was ever well pleased.

But now that He has passed through the unparalleled hour, when made sin, He was forsaken of God and, having died, He enters in resurrection into the blessedness of His own relationship, and declares it as that into which He can now bring all His people; it is now, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." John 20:17. It is not "our Father" now; that would be beneath His glory. It is His own relationship as man, and into this He brings, by His own work, those for whom He has wrought redemption; and more, it is the place He then took on high. It is into this blessed relationship and access to the Father the Lord now brings His people; and not only so, but He Himself is in their midst, leading their praise. "In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." This is the characteristic praise of the Church of God, and it is the more remarkable to find it here, as the psalms do not bring out the Church's portion, but Israel's. It is the worship of those whom the Lord brings into His own relationship to God His Father. It is the worship of those who stand consciously in the full results of His atonement, and are brought into the same nearness to God as He is in, when He says, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God"; and He is in their midst leading the worship. It is the worship of saints and not of poor sinners as such worshiping. This is peculiarly the worship and position of saints now. There will never be anything like it again. The

day is coming when the earth's groans shall cease - when heaven and earth shall be filled with praise - but there will never be a day such as this. It will not be worship in the holiest then, or the name of the Father on the lips of those who worship. This psalm proves it. It is "Thy name" declared "unto My brethren" in verse 22. In the next verse the Lord calls on those "who fear" Jehovah to praise Him. This verse brings us onto Jewish ground. It is not the Lord leading the praises in the Church, but calling on those who fear Jehovah, and the seed of Israel, to praise.

Jehovah, and not Father, is the title now. The call to praise is upon the ground of the same work. "For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from Him; but when He cried unto Him, He heard." v. 24. The praise is founded upon the work of the cross, when He cried, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," and was heard; and now the public answer is given, in the Father having raised Him from the dead. It is the call of praise on the ground of atonement. This is very distinctly marked in the 25th verse. Then it is the Messiah's praise in the great congregation. But it is not now in the midst of the Church, as in verse 22.

We have the two positions in John 20. On the first day of the week when the Lord appears in their midst and, besides saluting them with peace, breathes on them and says, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost"; and on the 8th day when Thomas owns Him with the confession, "My Lord and my God," and where we have no breathing on them, and no mention of the Holy Ghost. Thomas confesses Him according to the Jewish faith, but there is not in the second scene anything that speaks of association with Christ. It is not the blessedness now of union, nor even of association, but the Lord paying His vows in the great congregation, as the Head of Israel; and they are gathered as a people round the Lord their God. Then we find the meek. "The meek shall eat and be satisfied." They shall now enter into earthly blessing. It is the accomplishment of the promise: "The meek shall inherit the earth." Then t h e blessing flows out, and "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee." To apply this now is only to deceive; it is a baseless fable now. Then it will extend to all the kingdoms of the nations. "For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and He is the governor among the nations."

The more we examine these verses, the more we see we are upon prophetic and earthly, not Christian, ground. We have earth in its place. Verse 22 is Christian ground. In verse 23 we have Israel. Verse 24 speaks of the atonement as the ground of all the blessing of the psalm from now unto the millennial day. But now it is a little flock, and not a great congregation; whatever departs from this is inconsistent with the cross. In the time of future glory it will be the great congregation, and all the ends of the world, and all the kindreds of the nations - they will praise Jehovah.

The Remnant in Jude

Jude 20-23

No one can deny the conservative character of Jude's epistle; I mean by "conservative" the keeping of that which is good. Notice, for instance, the expression in the first verse, "preserved in Christ Jesus"; and that in the 21st, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." It is the same root word in both cases.

The apostasy is not far off, and, morally speaking, Christendom has left its first estate since many a long year. It is a serious thing to be living in an age when men are ready to throw off the very form of Christianity. Surely we cannot be blind to the fact that soon the mantle shall be discarded, seeing, as we can, to follow the illustration of the fable, the wolf's ear above the shepherd's cloak.

Departure from original estate, and utter contempt for all authority are the two great things which characterize this epistle; there is a kind of gradation, no doubt, in the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, and the gainsaying of Core; for self-will and murder are followed by corrupt practice, and finally by open rebellion against God.

We are living, beloved brethren, in these last and evil days-days in which a railing judgment is lightly passed upon all established authorities, and when mockery is applied to true godliness. Judgment must fall upon the whole scene; and Enoch, the seventh from Adam, had so foreseen the crisis, that he had said. "The Lord has come amidst His holy myriads, to execute judgment against all" (J.N.D. Trans.), anticipating the terrible issue of this world's history. We are not to be astonished at the state of things, for all has been foretold by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us look at the final exhortation, and notice the peculiar position and service of the little remnant amid all the desolation around. There is one bright spot as one may sometimes see one bright ray coming through the clouds in a dark and lowering evening landscape.

Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit should characterize our state - keeping yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. There is true edification and true prayer, not merely an assent to certain doctrines; and thus we are kept in the love of God, in His unchanging, infinite love, while we await the day in which we shall enter into His glory, and be in our home forever. Children of the day, we wait that moment when we shall be glorified, and shall be in the proper sphere of that life which we already have in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Notice that "mercy" characterizes this epistle; it is displayed to us every day and every hour, and shall crown our whole history upon earth, when the Lord shall come to take us out of this dark world, before Enoch's vision be accomplished.

It is very blessed when there is true building up and true prayer; it is not merely "by" or "through" the Holy Ghost, but it implies also a spiritual state, so that the prayers are truly for Christ's glory, even in the midst of all the evil of the last days. (Compare John 16:23, 24.) Then comes a special

service, needing spirituality - the service of separating the precious from the vile.

Jeremiah, in the 15th chapter of his prophecy, was separate from the assembly of the mockers when Jehovah sent him to take forth the precious from the vile; and so in Jude's epistle there must be a state of spiritual vigor and communion (may we have more of it!) before we attempt to help others. I well remember many, years ago trying to pull a lad out of the water, and falling into it myself.

Spiritual discernment is needed so as to be able to pluck out of the fire some who are in it; fear too, lest, in accomplishing this difficult work, one's own garment be stained. It is a wonderful and blessed service amid all the corruption; and the maintaining of a spiritual state, of the consciousness of God's infinite love to us, and of a sense of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, are needed every moment of our lives; otherwise, we might be overcome of evil.

The last two verses bring before us the power of the only God our Savior, who is able to keep us and sustain us in a critical time and a difficult service. We ourselves have been delivered, and He will use us to the very end of our course for the deliverance of others. May we have faith in Him. There will be loud shouts of joy when the victory shall be proclaimed before the universe; in the meantime, may we depend upon our Savior God.

To Him that is able to keep you from falling (that is, without stumbling), and to present you faultless before His glory with exceeding joy (with exultation), to the only God our Savior, through Christ Jesus our Lord, be glory, majesty, might and authority, both now and to all the ages. Amen.

Rivers of Living Water

John 7-Quotations largely Mr. Darby's own Translation

In this Gospel we get not only the testimony to the Jewish people of the Messiah and the message of the kingdom, but the glorious doctrine of the Person of Christ, the rejection of which rendered it more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for them.

In the previous gospels we have the Lord set before us, as Son of Abraham, Son of David, Son of man, the Messiah, the servant, the perfect Israelite. This Christ-rejecting generation not only broke the law but discarded the promises as well. Abraham's seed but rebels against Abraham's God; they who had the promises must now come in on a common level with the Gentile through grace. God is faithful to His Word, that is true; but it is only under mercy they can be saved. We have no historical account of Christ in this Gospel-no genealogy - but we are taken back to the beginning of the book of Genesis, and get a truth deeper, higher, and far beyond that of the other gospels, even the glory of Christ as it ever was before He became the Incarnate Word. And this is very blessed for us, for we get eternal life in Him-in Him who has life in Himself.

It is not the promises we get (though we get them too), but it is the Promiser Himself. It is this blessed One who is our life-life that existed before worlds began. He had a former glory, but this glory of His Person, where is that to be found? In His redeemed, there it will be displayed. Christ came to His own, but they received Him not; and since, they have been treated as reprobates all along. Up to Christ's rejection, God tried man; He left him without law, put him under law, gave him priesthood and prophets, and in due time sent His only begotten Son. All was without avail. Did they reverence Him? No. This is the heir, said they; we will kill Him and the inheritance will be ours, bringing to light that most dreadful truth, "The carnal mind is enmity against God."

Man would not have the holiness of God; neither would he have the love of God. And now God brings in a new thing-a spring of life-and puts away sin through the cross of His Son; and Christ, having died for sin, takes His seat at the right hand of God, victorious over all, and sends down the promised Spirit to enable us to walk before Him.

In chapter 6 we get Christ feeding the multitude who followed Him (and the disciples too).

There are three great feasts spoken of that the Jews always kept - the Passover, the Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. In this last feast the vintage was prefigured, the showing by a figure they had been a people who had dwelt in booths, but now had rest. Christ could feed them in the wilderness, but He could not go with them to this feast; for before Christ could enter on a rest down here, the work of redemption must be accomplished, and the Church must be taken. Therefore He said, "I go not up yet unto this feast, for My time is not fully come." His brethren may go, but He could not now declare His glory and enter upon His rest. But there was an eighth day, when comes rest; then He would keep the Feast of Tabernacles; then should God's holly rest be on the earth, God's Church being in the glory.

We get the Spirit spoken of in three ways: first, all saved ones from the beginning to the end are born of the Spirit; second, the Spirit in them is a well of water springing up; third, rivers flowing out. "In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise." The Holy Ghost was not yet given, we read, "because Jesus was not yet glorified." Mark, before the disciples could receive the Holy Ghost, the work of atonement must be done, and Jesus be a glorified man, seated up there at God's right hand. Who? A man. Why? Sin is put away. Yes, Jesus as Son of man is glorified; as Son of God He was ever the glorified One. God was so glorified by the work of His Son that, so to speak, He became His debtor. How did the Son of man glorify God? By suffering for my sins on the cross. God's judgment was perfectly met, and God perfectly glorified the Man Christ Jesus who endured the wrath. The exaltation of this glorified Man is the witness that my sins are fully put away. What does God say about my sins now? "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

Where was the truth of God displayed that said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," and Satan's lie fully proved which said, Thou shalt not die? On the cross Christ died. God is love. The majesty, the holiness, the love of God were magnified on the cross. The question of sin is settled. The Son of man is glorified. God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit have all been occupied about my sin. What a footing I have! Done with sins, no more conscience of them; Christ has taken them clean off. He could not bring us into God's presence with ONE sin upon us. No; though they were "as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." Christ became obedient unto death; and this settles the whole thing, and gives power to the poor sinner. With what holy freedom I can go into God's presence, when I know Christ is there, seated at God's right hand, as my forerunner! I have a perfect righteousness, a perfect love, and a perfect obedience to appear in. What comfort and what joy! You could not go into God's presence with one sin upon you; it would be folly to think of it-madness to attempt it. One sin unpardoned would unfit you for enjoying God. You must be perfectly clean. The blood of Christ does cleanse from all sin, so that the soul in the presence of God can enjoy God - we "joy in God."

The glorified Jesus seated in heaven sends down the Comforter to give us power for fellowship with Him. See the place He has taken, one with the redeemed on earth. Never until after the resurrection does He call His disciples "brethren," nor does He say, "Peace be with you," before then. He did say, "Fear not." (But He had not made peace.) "All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine"-all are ours in Christ. We have His righteousness; we wait for the hope. We have the earnest; we wait for the inheritance. We have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. And when we view the holiness, the power, the love of God, how delightful is the thought, He is my Father! The love wherewith He has loved His own Son, He has bestowed upon me. No man has seen God at any time, but we the Father is by the Son. We see in Him the outflowings of the divine fullness, and we must drink at this Rock. It is not enough for us to see; we must draw from Him; and there will be the conscious out flowing of what He is. What a character that truth should give us! One with Christ in heaven, "Head of His body, the church"; a living union with Him; God for us, Christ in us, the Spirit's seal on us.

"If any man thirst." We must remember we do not drink for others, and others cannot drink for us. I must FEEL my own want, and I must bring my own want to Christ myself. There must be a thirsting before there can be a drinking. Have I a want in my heart that Christ cannot meet? No. Is there a spiritual want in the soul that goes to Christ without finding relief? No. "If any man thirst." Now

there must be a need, and that need must be felt, known, and brought to Christ. Then, no matter what it be, He says, "Come unto Me and drink." "If ye knew the gift of God, ye would ask of Me, and I would give you living water." Think, beloved friends, of Christ sitting at a well. Which of us would not gladly go to Him with open hearts, and let Him read out of them all their need? He is not to be put off. He knew her need, and left her not until she felt it, and He met it. If we are to be useful to poor sinners, we must be more like Christ. Why we help them so little is, that we do not come down low enough to them in grace. Think of the place Christ ever took toward them, and follow Him, being partakers of the grace, and remembering the word, "if any man thirst."

In the last chapter of Revelation we have another word. Now, having this water of life in us, we are in a position to say, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." We have not the Bridegroom; we wait for Him. But we have the Spirit, the living water. We can count on the grace and love of God, knowing it will not fail for any who cast themselves on the blood of Jesus.

Scripture Notes: Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:1-3

Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:1-3

While Melchizedek is confessedly a mysterious personage, his typical significance is clear from the inspired explanation in the epistle to the Hebrews. In Genesis we learn that he was king of Salem (undoubtedly Jerusalem, see Psalm 76), and priest of the most High God, and that, bringing forth bread and wine, he blessed Abraham on returning from the slaughter of the kings. This is all the information the history affords. When we come to the Hebrews, the Apostle tells us how and in what manner he was a figure of the priesthood of Christ. First, his name, Melchizedek, means king of righteousness, and then king of Salem, which is, king of peace. Now these are the two characters in which Christ will reign in the kingdom - first as David, and then as Solomon, though He will ever combine the two - for He will reign throughout the thousand years in righteousness, and the effect of this will be peace, according to that word, "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness" (Psalm 72:3; compare Isaiah 32:17).

But Melchizedek was also a priest, and it is of Christ as the royal priest that he is specially the shadow, even as we read in the Psalm, "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Psalm 110:4. It is this of which the Apostle writes in Hebrews 7, where he is showing the superiority of the priesthood of our Lord to that of Aaron; and in doing this, he tells us that Melchizedek was "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." Some, pressing the literal meaning of these expressions, have raised difficulties; but the term "without descent," or, without genealogy, makes all plain. It simply means that Melchizedek has no recorded genealogy in the Scriptures - that in this sense he is without father or mother, and that his birth and death are left unnoticed, to the end that he might be a type of the everlasting priesthood of Christ. In this way he is "made like unto the Son of God"; he appears on the scene as God's priest, and, inasmuch as there is no account of his having ever passed away, he is regarded as being a priest continually; and he is so regarded that he might be a more perfect type of the glorious and unchangeable priesthood of our Lord and Savior. He was not, as some have ventured to assert, the Son of God, but only a figure of Him in the character of His priesthood.

It may be added, that the present service of Christ as the Priest is after the pattern of that of Aaron; but when He comes forth in His robes of glory and beauty, He will assume the Melchizedek character; for He will then be a Priest on His throne. But if He is king and priest, all believers, through virtue of association with Him in the grace of God, will also be kings and priests (see Rev. 1:5, 6); and hence the twenty-four elders are seen seated on thrones, robed with priestly garments, and with crowns of gold on their heads (Rev. 4).

Scripture Notes: Luke 24:29; John 1:38-39

Luke 24:29; John 1:38, 39

In the address to Laodicea, the Lord, standing at the door and knocking, says, "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). In the incidents recorded in the above scriptures, we have an illustration of the fulfillment of this promise.

The two disciples on the journey to Emmaus, though they had not recognized their Companion, had been drawn toward Him; for their hearts had burned within them while He talked with them by the way, and while He had opened to them the Scriptures. When, therefore, arriving at their destination, He made as though He would have gone further, they constrained Him to abide with them; for they said, "It is toward evening, and the day is far spent." They had, in fact, heard His voice, and opened the door; and He joyfully entered and supped with them. And while He in His tender grace was seated at table with them, their eyes were opened, and they knew Him. It was the first time they had ever truly seen and known Him (compare 1 John 1:1-3), for it is only in such intimate communings that the Lord really discloses Himself to His people. How much then they would have lost, had they not constrained Him to enter!

It is somewhat different with the two disciples of John. They had heard the heart utterance of their master when, filled with the beauty of the One on whom he gazed, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" This unconscious testimony (for he was rather expressing the admiration of his own heart than bearing witness) went home to their souls in such power, that they left their master, and followed Jesus. The attractions of "the Lamb of God" caused an intense desire to know more of the One who had been pointed out to them. The feelings of John had been transferred to their hearts (and this is always the characteristic of a testimony in the power of the Spirit), and now they only desired to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to be in His presence.

Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What seek ye?" He knew their hearts. He had watched the effect of the words of His servant; and now, by this question, He was but seeking to elicit their desire, that He might satisfy them beyond all their expectations. They thus replied, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" for already they had been taught that Christ could only be fully known in His own home.

Like the Queen of Sheba they were not satisfied with the report that had reached their ears; but they would see His beauty and hear His wisdom for themselves, in the only place where He could fully display what He was, where He dwelt. They could not have given greater delight to the heart of Christ than by this question; and hence He instantly responded, "Come and see." And "They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour."

They went and entered at His invitation, and they "supped" with Him; for they feasted on Him and on His things. That they were abundantly satisfied we know, for they went forth from that secret place of communion, entranced with the beauty they had witnessed, to testify of the One they had

seen and heard. And sure we are that they would have also said with the Queen of Sheba, "It was a true report that I heard... of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard." 1 Kings 10:6, 7.

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

The Seal and the Earnest: the Holy Spirit

THE SEAL AND THE EARNEST

."Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Eph. 4:30.

"In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." Eph. 1:13, 14.

In these verses we have the Spirit of God presented to us in two distinct ways; namely, first, as the seal which God puts upon all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and second, as the earnest of the inheritance which the sealed heirs shall possess ere long.

All true believers are sealed with the Holy Ghost. We must, of course, distinguish between quickened and sealed. The Holy Spirit quickens dead souls; He seals living believers; that is, He is Himself the seal. God does not seal sinners dead in trespasses and sins; He quickens them, leads them to repentance; and when through grace they believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ - crucified, risen, and glorified at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens-then He seals them by giving the Holy Ghost to dwell in them. Thus He sets His blessed mark on them until the day of redemption.

It is very important to be clear as to the difference between quickening and sealing. Many persons find difficulty here, but Scripture is as plain as possible on the subject. Take for example the opening paragraph of Acts 19: "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" -or rather, "We did not even hear if the Holy Ghost was come." "And he said unto them. Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied."

Here then we have with great clearness and force the distinction between quickening and sealing. Here were twelve men who evidently were disciples, and who had received a measure of truth, but not the full truth of accomplished redemption, of a risen and glorified Savior, and of the Holy Ghost as the witness of these grand and glorious facts.

We are not to suppose that these disciples had never heard of the existence of the Holy Ghost. In this our Authorized Version is manifestly defective. What they had not heard was whether the Holy Ghost had come down as the witness and solid proof of the exaltation and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist, whose disciples they were, knew and spoke of the Holy Spirit, so that they must have known of that divine Person; but he did not, could not know, and therefore could not

speak of Him as the seal put upon all true believers.

And yet they were true disciples, really quickened souls, but not sealed. They were practically in the condition of the Old Testament believers, or of the disciples during our Lord's life on earth. There was this difference, that the Holy Ghost had come on the day of Pentecost, and had been working for years, not only in quickening but in sealing. Thousands of Jews at Jerusalem, many of the Samaritans, the household of Cornelius, had all received the Holy Ghost; and yet the twelve disciples at Ephesus had not even heard of His descent.

Hence then it is plain that persons may be quickened, but not sealed. What was true of those Ephesians, years after the day of Pentecost, may be equally true of souls now. How many of the Lord's beloved people throughout the wide field of Christian profession are in this condition! They do not know what it is to be linked by the indwelling Spirit to a risen and glorified Head in heaven. They are virtually under the law; they do not know the blessedness of settled peace with God; they enjoy not the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free; they are in bondage, filled with doubts and fears. Through legality, bad teaching, or some other cause, they have been kept in ignorance of "the things which are freely given to us of God"; and thus they have been groping on in darkness and distance, instead of enjoying that blessed nearness to God which is the portion of all those who simply believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.

However we shall not dwell further just now on the important and interesting distinction between quickening and sealing - the former being the work of the Spirit, the latter His personal indwelling-but shall, ere closing this very brief article, call the serious attention of the Christian reader to the weighty word of exhortation quoted above, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

This word assumes that the Christian knows himself to be a sealed one. All Christian exhortation is based on the fact of our being in the enjoyment of Christian position and privilege. We could not grieve the Holy Spirit if He were not in us; but When We know what it is to have such a One as the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in us, making our body His temple, what a powerful motive to holy living! How careful we should be not to grieve Him. How we should watch against every thought, word, and act that would be offensive to the divine Guest who has taken up His abode in us! All lightness and frivolity, all unhallowed conversation, all evil speaking, all unkindness, moroseness and irritability, all selfish ways, all worldly mindedness, must be judged according to the standard of the Holy One by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption. It is no longer a question of what is suitable or consistent for us, but for Him. This makes all the difference. Many a thing might be suitable for us which would be grievous to Him. Our constant inquiry should be, Will this thing grieve the Holy Spirit who dwells in me? If so, let us, by the grace of God, judge and reject it with holy decision.

May the Lord enable us to bend our earnest attention to His most precious word of exhortation, so that His holy name may be more fully glorified in our daily lives!

And now a very few words on the subject of "the earnest." This is a most precious aspect of the Spirit's office and work. He "is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." The inheritance is purchased; the price has been paid. But it is not yet redeemed; for this latter we wait; and while waiting, our God has most graciously given us the earnest of His

Spirit, so that we are as sure of the inheritance as though we were already in possession of it. The earnest is a part of what we are to get. "Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ" - most precious words! - "and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Cor. 1:21, 22.

We must carefully distinguish between purchase and redemption. Many confound them and thus suffer serious loss. Our Lord Jesus Christ has purchased the whole universe. He paid the redemption price for the inheritance; but He has not yet laid His mighty hand in redeeming power thereupon. Redemption by price is one thing; redemption by power, quite another.

In the year 1834, the British Legislature voted twenty millions of money to redeem the slaves in the Colonies. This was redemption by price. But then, notwithstanding the payment of this redemption price, some poor slaves might be found huddled together in a slave ship. What was needed in their case? Redemption by power, in virtue of the price. A British man-of-war might seize the slave ship and let go all the poor captives. This may in some feeble manner illustrate the difference between purchase and redemption.

In Romans 8 we have a splendid passage which we might quote for the reader. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.... For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

As regards the body of the believer, as in respect to the inheritance, the redemption price has been paid, but it is not yet redeemed; "We groan within ourselves." We sigh for the redemption. We wait for the moment of deliverance. "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body [body of humiliation], that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body [His body of glory], according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Phil. 3:20, 21.

Glorious prospect! How precious for the weary, suffering pilgrim who feels the burden of his poor crumbling tabernacle! The Lord is at hand. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God will soon be heard, and then mortality shall be swallowed up of life. Till then we are sealed with that blessed Spirit of God who is the earnest-not of His love which we possess, but - of the inheritance for which we wait.

Search the Scriptures

"Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:11.

The Word of God is sufficient for every possible condition. Acquaintance with it is the one way of being fortified against every insidious effort of the enemy.

May God in His mercy cause us to direct our attention to it more and more, with unceasing prayer.

Let it be the subject of meditation day and night while, with unremitting desire and patience, we study and search the sacred page. It is the diligent soul that is made fat.

Secret Prayer

It is this going into our closet and shutting the door ; it is this that is wanted, brethren - secret prayer. This is the mainspring of everything. And yet we make excuses, and say we cannot find time. But the truth is, if we cannot find time for secret prayer, it matters little to the Lord whether we find time for public service or not. Is it not the case that too often we can find time for everything except this getting into our closet and shutting the door in order to be alone with God? We can find time to talk with our brethren, and the minutes fly past unheeded until they become hours ; and we do not feel it a burden. Yet when we find we should be getting into our closet to be alone with God for a season, there are ever so many difficulties s t an din g right in the way. Ten thousand foes arise to keep us from that hallowed spot, "thy closet." It would seem as if Satan cares not how we are employed, so that we seek not

our Father's face ; for well the great tempter knows if he can but intercept the communications between us and our God, he has us at his mercy. Yes, we can find time for everything but this slipping away to wrestle with God in prayer.

We find time, it may be, even to preach the gospel and minister to the saints while our own souls are barren for lack of secret prayer and communion with God! W h at saints we often appear before people! Oh, the subtlety of this Adam nature! When we go into our closet and shut the door, no one sees us, no one hears us, but God. It is not the place to make a fair show. No one is present before whom to make a little display of our devotion. No one is there to behold our zeal for the Lord. No one is there but God; and we know we dare not attempt to make Him believe we are different from what we really are. We feel that He is looking through us, and that He sees and knows us thoroughly.

If evil is lurking within, we instinctively feel that God is searching us ; for evil cannot dwell with Him (Psa. 5 :4). Ah, it is a searching spot - alone in the presence of God. Little wonder so many beg to be excused from it. But, beloved, it is the lack of it that is the secret of much of the lifelessness and carnality which abound. The prayer meeting will not suffice us, blessed privilege though it be. "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, a n d when thou hast shut thy door, pray" (Matt. 6:6). How many there may be who have gradually left off secret prayer, until communion with God has been as effectively severed as if for them there were no God at all!

That God has His praying ones, we believe - yea, we rejoice to know. He is never without faithful ones who cry day and night to Him. Yet the terrible downward current of these last days is carrying the many of God's people before it; and the great enemy of souls could not have hit upon a more deadly device for making merchandise of the saints than by stopping their intercourse with the throne of grace.

The lack of secret prayer implies a positive absence of desire for th e presence of God. Such fall an easy prey to temptation. Satan gets an advantage over them easily.

If a brother is not at the prayer meeting for a time or two, you can speak to him about it and exhort him. His absence is a thing you can see. But if he is absenting himself from the closet, that is a thing beyond your observation. You only feel, when you come in contact with him, that something is sapping his spiritual life ; and who can estimate the eternal loss that follows the neglect of secret prayer!

"I missed prayer for a time," said one who had tasted of heavenly joys, "and then I missed it oftener; and things went on this way until, somehow, everything slipped through my fingers, and I found myself in the world again." How different it is with those who watch with jealous care that the Lord has always His portion, whoever else may have to want theirs. Their going out, their coming in, their whole manner of life, declare that they have been where the heavenly dew has been falling. Their Father, who saw them in secret,

is rewarding them openly. They carry about with them, although all unconscious of it, the serenity of the secret place where they have been communing with God as friend with friend. Where this is wanting, it is little wonder that saints get as worldly as the very worldling. Little wonder the plainest precepts of the Word of God are brought to bear on them in vain.

It is an Abraham in sweet communion with God that knows the fate of Sodom, long before the dwellers in that city are dreaming of danger. And it is the same Abraham who hastens and rises early in the morning to do the thing the Lord had commanded, although that thing be the severing of nature's tenderest tie (Gen. 22).

Men of communion are men of obedience. It is men delighting to be near the king who are ready to hazard their lives to fetch him a drink from Bethlehem's well (1 Chron. 11:18). And it is men of prayer who have moved the arm of Omnipotence in all

ages, while they who seemed to have least need to pray have been the very ones to whom the closet has been dearest. Our great Example was a man of prayer. We read of Him rising a great while before day and departing into a solitary place to pray (Mark 1:35). Let us follow Him whithersoever He goeth. If He needed the aids of heavenly power to help Him in the evil hour, how much more do we? Then let no uncertain sound be given in this all-important matter. Let secret prayer be urged on God's people as one of the great essentials of spiritual life, without which our grandest services will be barren and fruitless in the eyes of Him who looks on the heart.

Beloved brethren, let each one of us ask himself the question, Am I delighting in the secret place, to plead with the Lord, to renew my strength, to have power with God and prevail? If not, let us confess our neglect. God will forgive, and renew our spiritual energy.

Self-Knowledge

Deuteronomy 8

The Christian cannot be in a difficulty for which Christ is not sufficient, nor on a long, dark road where he cannot find Him enough. God's rest is where he can find perfect rest. Do you think God could find rest in this world? Have you ever found rest in it? Though He was perfect love above all the evil, yet He could not rest. When the Jews charged the Lord Jesus with breaking the Sabbath, He said that sweet and lovely word, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). Could love rest in the midst of woe? When all the saints are perfectly conformed to Christ in glory - when, as is expressed in Zephaniah (and we may apply it to ourselves), "He [God] will rest in His love" - He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. There will be nothing that hinders the enjoyment of the love and glory of God. Oh, the blessed future that is before us! The full result of redemption will be accomplished, and God will rest, because His love has no more to do to satisfy Himself.

God wants, as a present thing, our hearts to be in tune with His in our everyday life. He wants that. Therefore we find here, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart," etc. Now God says, in substance, "Your heart and Mine want to have a little talk together. I am going to show you what is in your heart, and show you that I know it." He has brought you to Himself; and do you think that, if all that is in your heart is not brought out to Him, it will be all right between you? Do you think a father likes to have his heart all different to his child's heart? He desires that the whole spirit, soul, and mind of his child be suited to his mind. God passes us through the wilderness that we may learn this. You often see a true Christian not knowing where he is at his deathbed, because he has not had everything out with God day by day.

"Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." Acts 24:16. The exercise of Paul was whether his heart was in everything attuned to God's heart. Christ's heart was. He could always say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). Enoch walked with God; and he had this testimony, that he pleased God. He was walking in God's presence, and the effect of it was that he pleased God. You could not walk with God without having everything out with Him. If you have something on your conscience, you will not be happy. Every step we take, we see Him better; the light gets clearer, and we find things to judge that we had not known must be judged before - according to that which we know of the glory of God. Are our hearts up to it? And supposing they are not, what is the effect of God's presence? Why, it has to set our consciences to work in order to bring us into communion. "My son, give Me thine heart." Are our hearts given to God out and out?

"He humbled thee" (v. 3). He brings us to our bearings. He causes us to live by faith. "Fed thee with manna." Do not our souls sometimes loathe the light food? Is it not often true that Christ does not satisfy our hearts? Of course, if our hearts are cleaving to something else, Christ will not satisfy us. "Man doth not live by bread only." Christ quoted this to the devil in the wilderness. He

had no word from God for the stones to be made bread, and He had taken on Himself the form of a servant. His will was motionless until it had God's will to make it act. The word of the Lord abides forever; that is the dependence of faith. Mark another thing, that while God kept His people in dependence on His word to guide them, He did not allow their raiment to wax old, neither their feet to swell all the forty years. He thought of everything for them, for "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous" (Job 36:7) - not for a moment does He cease to think of them.

Then comes another character of His dealings. "As a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee" (v. 5). First of all, God passes us through circumstances which exercise us (feeding us and taking care of us all the time), and then there is the positive discipline for the breaking of the will. Every day one sees God doing it; and we often do not know where we are, and get questioning the love that did it. Look at Romans 5. God loves us as He loved Christ, and we are rejoicing in hope of the glory where Christ is. And not only so (when he has gone through the whole thing, that is not all), I am not only rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, but I am rejoicing in tribulations also, because God is not withdrawing His eyes from me in them. The hope is so much the brighter; for, oh, I say my rest is not here - that is a clear thing! And the hope makes not ashamed, because I have the key to it all in the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. It is God's ways and work to make us know ourselves. There can be no question of the love, because He has given us the key to it all.

How, then, has He proved it? Why, it goes on to state that in the next verse: "Christ died for the ungodly." Then he says again, "Not only so." What? "But we also joy in God." I have got to know myself, all my waywardness and forgetfulness of God, that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing; but in this way of self-judgment, I have learned to joy in God. It is to bring the heart into this tune with God that He has to break it down and humble it. But this being in tune with God is never reached - that settled consciousness of association with God - until, through these ways and words of God, we have got to the bottom of self. It is not that we shall not always have to contend with it; but its back is broken, and I have henceforward no trust in myself. The natural man says, "Whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" But at the end (Psalm 139) he says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." Up to the knowledge you have of divine things, is your heart in tune with Him? Could you say, "Search me"? It is sometimes a painful process.

"Lead me in the way everlasting." Beloved friends, there is a way everlasting, and it is in that way everlasting that God comes and searches the heart. Are you content to have every motive searched out? It must be so if our communion with God and joy in Him is to be full and uninterrupted. We get these three things- the proving, of our hearts, the chastening, and the conflict with Satan (v. 15) - "to do thee good at thy latter end."

Beloved, if your souls would walk in peace and fellowship with God, you must learn that there is no good in you; but you must also learn to know Him in the perfectness of His love. It is present joy and fellowship with God; and if we go on with it, when death comes, then it is "absent from the body,... present with the Lord," and it is the brightest moment in the life. All these exercises of heart are self-knowledge. If you want to walk so as to glorify God in fellowship with the Father and the Son, then you must go through this having the conscience exercised to be "void of offense"; and as to the affections of the heart, having Christ at the bottom, and a walk which no one can blame at the top; but between them are all the thoughts and intents of the heart. You must have

the soul practically exercised before God. You must learn the ways of God with you, that you may be in tune with Him. The Lord give us to know more of a walk with Him, that we may have the kind of peace Christ had in His walk down here - that peace of heart which the soul knows in fellowship with the Father and the Son. The Lord give you to know what it is to have everything in your heart open before God.

Settled Peace? How Can We Have It?

A dead and risen Christ is the groundwork of salvation. "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." Rom. 4:25. To see Jesus by the eye of faith nailed to the cross, and seated on the throne, must give solid peace to the conscience, and perfect liberty to the heart. We can look into the tomb and see it empty; we can look up to the throne and see it occupied, and go on our way rejoicing. The Lord Jesus settled everything on the cross on behalf of His people; and the proof of this settlement is that He is now at the right hand of God. A risen Christ is the eternal proof of an accomplished redemption; and if redemption is an accomplished fact, the believer's peace is a settled reality.

We did not make peace, and never could make it; indeed, any effort on our part could only tend more fully to manifest us as peace-breakers. But Christ, having made peace by the blood of His cross, has taken His seat on high, triumphant over every enemy. By Him God preached peace. The word of the gospel conveys this peace; and the soul that believes the gospel has peace-settled peace before God-for Christ is his peace. (See Acts 10:36; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14; Col. 1:20.) In this way God has not only satisfied His own claims, but in so doing He has found a divinely righteous way through which His boundless affections may flow down to the guiltiest of Adam's progeny.

The Shepherd's Voice or the Voice of a Stranger

John 10 has special instruction for us at this moment. It is said, "They [the sheep] know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers."

The great and important matter is that "They know His voice." Beautiful and divine order is here; and a necessary effect of this is that they do not know the voice of strangers. What then? This is not all that is said, for (first), they will not follow the stranger; and (second), they will flee from him.

No animal is more foolish, as well as more feeble, it has been said, than the sheep. And thus the Lord by this figure would show us ourselves, and, blessed be His name, Himself too.

They only know it is not His voice; and thus everything is settled for them. They do not argue about the claims or the statements the voice makes. If it waxes louder and louder, it only makes them flee the farther and the faster from it. It is their wisdom to hear the Shepherd's voice; no path for them but what it points out; no food for them but what He gives; no love for them like His.

How does all this apply to the troubles and difficulties of these days? How, my reader, has it helped you in them? And where will you be found, if the Lord leaves you yet awhile to tread the wilderness? Oh, the grace that cares for us notwithstanding all! Jesus is the same (Heb. 13:8); His voice is still to be heard; His sheep are His still.

A Shipwreck

2 Tim. 4:10

Three times Demas is mentioned by the Apostle Paul. In Colossians he writes, "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you." Chap. 4:14. In Philemon he terms him, in company with Marcus, Aristarchus, and Lucas, as a "fellow laborer"; and in 2 Timothy he has to say, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (age).

Nothing can be more sad than this closing notice of one who had been identified with such a vessel of testimony as the Apostle Paul. The final break with Paul might have been sudden, but we may be sure that he had been long before in a backslidden state of soul. The very way, indeed, in which he is mentioned in Colossians, after Luke, the beloved physician, would seem to indicate that Paul was not ignorant of his condition. An open failure is always preceded by a gradual decline of spiritual life and energy. It is thus the Lord deals with His people. If they have grown cold, and are turned aside in heart from His ways, He permits them sooner or later to be tested, that their state may be discovered.

This was the case with Demas. His heart had long been upon the present age, and the captivity of Paul and the consequent "afflictions of the gospel" were but the occasion of its manifestation. A time of persecution is always a time of searching, and Demas could no longer conceal his condition. He therefore forsook the Apostle - the Lord's prisoner - and followed his heart into the world. He might have been a real Christian, not merely a professor, but, lacking courage, he lost the opportunity of fidelity to the testimony at such a solemn crisis, and surrendered himself to the influences of the age, all of which were antagonistic to the truth, and to the devoted servant to whom the truth had been committed.

The "age," as distinguished from the world, has generally a moral signification, and is expressive of the sum of the influences that are at work around us in the world at any given moment; and it is precisely these influences that constitute the danger of God's people, and to which so many, like Demas, succumb, and make "shipwreck" of their testimony. It is on this very account that the Apostle writes, "Be not conformed to this world [age]" (Rom. 12:2).

Sons of Korah

There is something peculiarly sweet in the songs of the sons of Korah, and few more precious than Psalm 84. If these shadows of heavenly things were so amiable-the earthly tabernacles of Jehovah: if these Levites so longed, yea, even fainted, for those earthly courts of the Lord, which were temporal- a worldly sanctuary, now vanished away; do we so long after the deep realities of the sanctuary of His presence, where two or three are gathered in His name?

But who are these sons of Korah? Many of our readers will say, "Sons of Korah; why, did not the sons of Korah go down alive into the pit, when the earth opened her mouth and swallowed those wicked men, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and all their wives and children?" Let us turn to the Scriptures and see. Here is the account of their rebellion against the Lord (Num. 16). How terrible is sin in the sight of the Lord! "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side." Now mark, in the next clause, Korah is omitted. "And Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children." v. 27. Now read that awful description of the earth opening her mouth and swallowing them up: "And all the men that appertained unto Korah," the earth closed upon them. There is no statement that the sons of Korah went down with their father. No, the Scripture is clear on this point. "And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign. Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not." Numb. 26:10, 11.

Yes, in the riches of sovereign grace, they were saved from going down alive into the pit. And this was not all. As part of the family of Kohath, they had given to them the cities of refuge, of which Hebron is named first (1 Chron. 6:54-67). Oh, how our God delights in mercy!

Grace spares them from the pit, and gives them the place of Abraham. For Abraham dwelt in Hebron (Gen. 13:18; 18:1).

Have you, beloved readers, been saved from the pit? Children of wrath, even as others, brought in sovereign grace to dwell in the heavenlies, not with Abraham, but in Christ. Oh, blest city of eternal refuge, Jerusalem on high! Can we not adore the riches of His grace?

Shall we trace this divine favor a little further? Saved from the lowest depths of the pit, these very sons of Korah "were over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle:... had the oversight of the gates of the house of the Loan... and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God." What a 'stewardship! "All the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices," and the meat offering, and "were over the showbread" (1 Chron. 9:19-32). What types of instruction to us! Saved from the lowest depths of hell, and brought to dwell in the eternal refuge of the presence of God by the blood of Jesus. And now what a stewardship, all the riches of the glories of Christ committed to us!

Yes, in the frankincense, and the spices, and the things made in the pans - types of the Person of Christ in all His adorable perfection-our portion. Once children of the pit. Is Christ thus precious to you? And does not all this tell out the varied ministries of the redeemed children of God? All these precious treasures of Christ committed to us. How great the responsibility! How rich the privilege! Very great was the strength required for all this service, and it was given to these favored sons of Korah. They were "mighty men of valor," "strong men," "able men for strength for the service"; and each had his appointed service (1 Chron. 26:1-20).

Would it not be very blessed if we, who have been saved from the pit, each knew from the Lord his appointed work? - weakness itself, yet strong for His service in the power of His might.

Grace upon grace shadowed forth in these sons of Korah. They were royal guards of the hidden king - guards of the house and guards of the foundation (2 Chron. 23:4, 5, 19). We are lost in wonder and praise. Saved from the pit, we are called to be the royal guards of the hidden, but coming, King of glory - guards of the house of God- guards of foundation truth. Once a child of the pit, now a child of glory - what dignity is this! Oh, for wholehearted devotedness to Him whom we shall soon meet in the air!

All this history of sovereign favor gives special sweetness to the psalms of these sons of Korah. But cannot we, now the shadows are past, also say, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth," etc. (Psalm 84:1, 2)? Have we not been saved from the pit? Is there any privilege so great as being gathered together unto the name of the Lord Jesus? "There am I," He says, "in the midst of them." Now read this psalm, and think of the deep reality to our souls. Each line of this psalm seems connected with this history of distinguishing grace. What a dwelling place is the presence of the Lord! They will be still praising Thee. Is this our happy place, our sweet employ? Dwelling, praising, strength, these were marks of divine favor to the sons of Korah; are they not to us?

Once sons of the pit, now sons of God, it is our privilege to leave blessing behind us everywhere in this vale of tears - this valley of Baca. On, beloved, from strength to strength. God beholds our everlasting shield; He looks upon the face of His Anointed. Can we not say, "A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Is not our God "as a sun and a shield"? "The LORD will give grace and glory." Sovereign blessing had the sons of Korah. "O LORD..., blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee."

Do we not feel rebuked by this song of the sons of Korah? Do not forget that the veil shut them out of the most holy; the way was not yet made manifest during these days of the worldly sanctuary (Heb. 9:1-8). Now the veil is rent. Now we have boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. And, oh, the joy of God in receiving us-our sins gone forever, no more to be remembered.

May each of these divine breathings in this precious psalm be applied with power to our souls by the Holy Ghost! From "Things New and Old"

Soul-Winning

The first essential in soul-winning is love. The "publicans and sinners" were irresistibly drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ who was the great Evangelist; they were drawn to Him by the power of that divine love that filled His heart for them. The skill displayed in His dealing with individual souls, and the gracious words which fell from His lips upon the ears of listening multitudes, were alike the outcome and the revelation of the love that He had for sinful man.

"Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Mark 1:17. The secret of soul-winning is found in this command of our Lord. How otherwise could this skill be obtained? Where else could this wisdom be found? Its price is "above rubies"; "neither shall it be valued with pure gold"! As we follow Him we shall catch the yearnings, the throbbings of His great heart of love, and shall as a result become a feeble reflex of Himself.

It has been rightly said that every evangelist is some little reflection of Christ, but alas that we should reflect Him so little! Tears are not often found upon our cheeks, nor sighs in our spirits. If we felt more in secret, as we contemplated the state of the unconverted, there would surely be more tender pathos in our pleadings, and souls would feel, at least, that we loved them. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

What a journey the Lord took, prompted only by love, when He went to seek that abandoned woman at the well (John 4). Do we ask that we may so love the drunkard and the harlot, the beggar and the cheat? With what consummate skill love wrought that day! He did not straightway reach her conscience. He must win her confidence first; this He did by asking favor at her hands, and then, using that as a text, He unfolded to her wonderful things (vv. 7, 10). Bearing with her slowness of apprehension, but ever keeping the end in view, He pressed on until her desires were awakened; then her conscience was probed, but she was not repelled. The revelation was slowly made; but, in the end, she was overwhelmed by the transcendent greatness of it, and could speak of naught besides. Blessed Master, we do well to come after Thee to learn such lessons in "soul-winning"!

He "spake... as they were able to hear it." His public preaching, ever simple and replete with illustrations, was always adapted to the company before Him; stern rebuke at times for the Pharisees, but not always, for tender reasonings are found also -witness that wonderful parable, in three parts, of Luke 15. May we ever be under the Holy Spirit's control to have like discernment.

We may have found ourselves on an occasion led to speak a word which has proved to be the very word needed, whether to an individual or publicly, and by it, souls have been cleared straightway. Then has come the danger; we have been prone to say of that word what David said of the sword of Goliath, "There is none like it," and have been surprised at not seeing results from the use of it again. But as the love of God to men is operative in our hearts, we shall be quick to detect where the soul is in its exercise, and to discern that truth that is needed for its help.

The great question today is, How are we to win souls from the awful indifference which has settled upon them? It is comparatively easy to deal with the few anxious inquirers that are found; but how shall we win souls who will not come to hear the gospel preached, and even resent our private solicitations? Love will keep our hearts soft and tender toward them; it will give us to be persistent, and, as opportunities occur, will enable us to deal wisely, with winsome words, until their souls are won. "The Lord give thee understanding in all things." Letters, pleading with souls, have often been used when other means have failed; and who shall count the number of souls won through such tracts as "Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment," and others?

We must never forget that our power with men is in proportion to our power with God. "We will give ourselves up to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4; J.N.D. Trans.).

The Lord graciously give us this wisdom in abundant measure, for "the wise winneth souls" (Pro. 11:30; J.N.D. Trans.).

Spiritual Sloth and Means of Restoration

Song of Solomon 5:2; 6:1-3

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

The state of soul thus indicated is always the result of succumbing to the influences of this world, and it is a state of soul which the Lord never views with indifference. No, He loves His people too well to permit them to continue in it; and He thus immediately seeks to arouse them from their slumber. It is so in this scripture, for the bride is at once made conscious that her Beloved is seeking an entrance. "It is," she says, "the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." v. 2.

The very terms He uses -the terms of endearment -were surely calculated to awaken the affections of her heart; for they express to her her own preciousness to Him, while they acknowledge that she had not forgotten Him. But the ground of His appeal lies in the contrast already shown: He was without, waking and watching, while she was within, in ease and comfort.

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

But He never presses Himself upon unwilling hearts; and thus, when He found that the door was closed against Him, He withdrew. The bride was conscious of His efforts to obtain admission. She had heard His voice, and she had heard His hand upon the door; and at length her heart responds, her "bowels were moved for him." Her sloth is removed, and, arising, she opened to her Beloved; but He "had withdrawn himself" (v. 6). She had, alas! lost her opportunity. When her Beloved pressed Himself upon her, she could not make the effort to receive Him; now that she had

opened the door, it was to find that He was gone. The soul has to learn that it must wait on the Lord's pleasure, that communion and the enjoyment of intimacy are only possible to a responsive heart - that, in a word, it can only repose on the Lord's bosom when He draws us into that blessed place. The Beloved had drawn near to the bride, and had presented Himself in all the attractions of His love for a season of ineffable blessedness; but she lost it because she was seeking rest in a scene where as yet He had found none.

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

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

In the next place, the bride encountered the "keepers of the walls," and they took away her veil from her - exposed her condition, her nakedness, bereft as she was for the moment, through her self-seeking, and negligence of her Beloved. If the watchmen answer to pastors, the keepers of the wall will find their counterpart in those who seek to maintain holiness in the house of God. The walls guard those within from the enemy without, exclude evil, and preserve those inside in peace and security. The keepers of the wall therefore maintain separation from evil and separation to God, jealously shutting out all who have no right of entrance, and admitting only such as can exhibit their title. When thus they found the bride seeking after her Beloved during the night, they take away her veil; for it was incumbent upon them to ascertain whether she was what she professed to be.

What a contrast between the bride in verse 1 and in verse 7! She had said, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits" (chap. 4:16). And He had instantly responded, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse,... I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk," etc. But there followed, as is so often the case in the experience of souls, a reaction upon this supreme season of enjoyment; and hence the next words are, "I sleep, but my soul waketh." And now she, who had been so happy in the presence of her Beloved,

feeding in His garden, is smitten and wounded by the watchmen, and unveiled by the keepers of the walls. But this very condition into which she has fallen is the way of recovery, and the action both of the watchmen and the keepers of the walls has this in view. They are the servants of the Beloved, they have His mind, and He it is who has guided them in their work; and hence the gracious effect of their ministry immediately appears in her intensified desire after her Beloved.

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

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

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

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

In the next place, the bride's restoration of soul is completed. Drawn out by the question of the daughters of Jerusalem, while she lingers with joy over the beauties of her Beloved, her soul is wrought upon, her affections are revived, and she discerns at once where the object of her search is to be found, and is thus able to tell her companions. "My beloved," she says, "is gone down into his garden, to the bed of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." All doubts have been

dissipated, and she adds with ineffable joy, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies." Let the reader carefully note this divine way of restoration. Whenever souls have fallen into a cold, lifeless condition, whenever they complain of a want of spiritual energy, let them occupy themselves with the varied perfections and graces of Christ as revealed in the Word; and, while pondering upon what He is to themselves, let them withal declare His beauties and attractions to others; and they will find that their hearts will soon glow with the returning fire of affection, and that they will be happy again in the sense of His presence and love.

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

Strangers and Pilgrims

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." 1 Pet. 2:11.

Among the many different names which Peter uses for believers in his first epistle are these two; namely, "strangers and pilgrims." God wants us ever to remember that since we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ we have no home here - we are strangers. But we do have a home there - we are pilgrims. We are pressing on to glory; we have a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called our God.

We are, however, going through the wilderness. But our God provides for every need and is able to give us power and grace to overcome and triumph in every difficulty and danger. We have not passed this way heretofore, but our Lord has.

Substitution and Righteousness

Part 1

My dear brother in Christ,

What you say about the blood of Christ I believe to be in the main correct. But to say "Sin attached to His life" is not a scriptural expression, and I think not a scriptural thought, although perhaps you mean right. Sins were laid upon Him, He bore our sins, and He was made sin, that is, sacrificially. 'The justice of God demanded the life of the sinner. The life is in the blood; and when Christ as the Substitute shed His blood, the life was given and the demand met. This is, however, a very small part of what is taught as to the blood and death of Christ.

When you say, "The whole life of Christ, and His laying down His life, were in obedience to God," you agree with the Word of God. But when you say, "If Christ is our Substitute from His birth to His death," you depart from Scripture, for Scripture does not say or teach it. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." He made atonement by His death. God has set Him forth a propitiation (or mercy seat) through faith in His blood. He was made a curse for us that we might be redeemed from the curse of the law. Where? On the tree. Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree. This is substitution. It is taking the sinner's place under sin and guilt, and drinking up the righteous wrath of God - the unmingled cup of gall filled up of God for Him - in the room and stead of the sinner.

The moment our sins were laid upon Him, the fellowship of God with Him was withdrawn. How could it be otherwise? If sin attached to His life from His birth to His death, or if He were made sin in His incarnation, how could a holy God have one moment's fellowship with Him? It would be impossible.

We find there was a life of unbroken fellowship with God until after He passed through the agony of Gethsemane and came into those three awful hours of darkness. In the wilderness, an angel is sent to comfort Him. At the Jordan the heavens open upon Him, and God says, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Never could the heavens open for such an announcement before. God had been trying man in every way, but failed to find one in whom He could delight. At last He found one - His beloved Son - the second Man, the last Adam. On Him the heavens opened, and God announced His own delight. In innumerable ways in His life you see the unbroken fellowship between Him and the Father. Finally you see it in Gethsemane, where His agony is not suffering in atonement, but His going through all the agony of the cross in anticipation, and in communion with His Father who sends an angel to strengthen Him. It was His having gone through it all in spirit with the Father in Gethsemane that prepared Him for the terrible hour of suffering in actual atonement. And when the hour did come, all was gone through in perfect calmness. As a lamb led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.

After that sin is laid on Him, God's face is withdrawn. The word is then, "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow." Instead of the heavens opening, and proclaiming God's delight, darkness filled the land; and the vengeance of heaven - the awful, unmitigated wrath and judgment of a holy God against sin - was poured out upon Him in that dark hour of unparalleled sorrow and agony. There was no light there, no opening heavens, no expression of divine delight, no ministering angel - nothing but the,, awful expression of God's judgment against sin - all the mighty waves of divine vengeance sweeping over His soul in the midst of that unmitigated darkness that closed over Him when His God forsook Him. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" was His cry.

In the Levitical offerings, the sin was transferred to the lamb when brought to the altar, not before. Then death immediately followed. So with God's spotless Lamb: When His hour was come, He gave Himself up to be a sacrifice. Sin was laid on Him then, and immediately God's judgment was expressed against it.

I do not mean to say that God had no delight in His Son while hung on the cross. Far from it. Surely if ever God was glorified, it was then. If ever His heart was satisfied, it was then. But sin was in question. God delighted in the One who took it on Him, but while it was on Him, there could be no fellowship-nothing but judgment. He took it on Him that it might be put away.

Again, not only did not Christ bear sin till His hour was come, but there was no relationship formed between Him and sinners during His life. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." It was impossible there could be union until guilt was atoned for. Union with Him is in resurrection. "But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:24. The moment He took man's place there was nothing but death. It was by going down to death that He put Himself in man's place, for man was dead in trespasses and sins. Having taken that place, He died unto sin once. And now as the risen One, the last Adam, He takes believing sinners into union with Himself on the ground of having put away their sins, and by taking them out of their old position in Adam, and linking them with Himself, the last Adam - a Man in the glory of God.

Again, there is no union with Him in His death. That is substitution, and substitution is not union. He takes my place as substitute, and I go free.

But there is representation in His death, as well as substitution. If I look at Him on the cross for me, I see first of all my guilt, my sins, laid on Him. That is substitution. He bears them; I do not. Again I see myself there represented by Him, not as bearing sins, but dying unto sin (for sin and sins are different, sins being my actions as a sinner, sin, a principle in my nature). As a child of Adam, depraved in my whole nature, a mass of sin (without any question of my sins), Christ having been made sin, represents me on the cross. If then I look at Him as my substitute, I say, "He has borne my sins, and God has forgiven me, and set me clean." But if I look at Him as representing me there in my first Adam state, I say, "Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." And again, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

There is a most important distinction here. I see the first case - substitution, resulting in forgiveness of sins, redemption from guilt - in Egypt, as the Israelites sit in the houses sheltered by the blood of the slain lamb. The second case I see at the Red Sea. The slain lamb was death by

substitution. The Red Sea was death by representation. The children of Israel pass through the sea, and thus in figure pass through death. And the result is, they get a new standing, outside of Egypt. They stand on the shore of the sea, as it were a new creation, on resurrection ground. They have forever cleared t h e death-doomed shores of the old creation. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Union is only on this ground. It is not in His life before the cross, nor in His death, but with Him in His resurrection life. If He had taken us into union with Himself either in incarnation or in death, He would have been uniting to Himself only a mass of horrible corruption.

His death opens the way for our union, but it is with Him risen that we are united. And we are united with Him as a new creation, sin condemned and sins forever cleared away by His death on the cross. I look at the cross, and there I see in the judgment of a holy God, every trace of myself as a child of Adam put away from His presence - old things passed away. I am now linked with the One who accomplished the work. I see Him today, the second Man, the last Adam, a Man in the glory, and I am linked with Him there - all. things have become new. Blessed, wondrous position for the believer! He has thus passed from under his guilt, and out of his position as a child of Adam, through the blood and death of Christ. He has passed beyond guilt, beyond death, beyond condemnation, beyond judgment, quickened, raised up and, seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus - linked forever with the Man in the glory of God, and accepted according to the full perfection both of His work and His Person.

Substitution and Righteousness

Part 2

I turn now to justification. As you say, it is "the justification of a sinner by a holy and righteous God." "It is God that justifieth." If then God is righteous, the justification of a sinner is a question in which righteousness is involved. Well, we know it cannot be by man's righteousness, either without law or under law. The Gentile without law was lawless. The Jew under law was a law-breaker. Every mouth was stopped, the whole world brought in guilty before God. How could God justify either the lawless or the law-breaker? Righteousness was not to be found in man. Where then could righteousness be found for man? Not in any creature surely, for the innocent creature-be it man or angel-has none to spare. All he has is due to God. The only source of righteousness then is God Himself. His righteousness is revealed in the gospel, on the principle of faith to faith.

God gave the law to man to test him. By it He demanded righteousness (not from man in innocence, but) from man, a sinner. But how could a sinner meet the righteous demands of a holy law? He could not. The only thing the law could do was to give the knowledge of sin, and condemn the sinner. When a man is brought to this extremity, God comes in grace. The righteousness of God is revealed-not a righteousness of man for God, but righteousness of God for man. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested." It is without the law - not on the principle of lawkeeping at all, whether by the sinner or by Christ. It is apart from law altogether. "Even the righteousness of God. by faith of Jesus Christ." It is by faith, without the deeds of the law, and that by faith of Jesus Christ, "unto all and upon all them that believe." Its tendency is unto or toward all men everywhere. Its scope is like that of the gospel - to every creature. But it is upon them that

believe. The offer is to all. The believer only receives it. The believer is "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Jesus by His blood redeems from guilt, and justifies every one thus redeemed. It is through redemption in Christ Jesus.

Now comes the basis. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [mercy seat] through faith in His blood." God has set forth Christ as a mercy seat, that is, a meeting place for God and the sinner. How does the sinner meet God there? "Through faith in His blood." You see, in this whole passage (Rom. 3) there is not a word about meeting God on the ground of law-keeping. What we have is the blood alone, and by it the sinner is justified. In virtue of the blood of Christ, the righteousness of God is revealed for the justification of the believer in Jesus and His blood. Here the motive on God's part for justification is the blood alone. That God has found more in Christ than His blood is blessedly true, as we shall see by-and-by. But what must be insisted on is that we have justification by the blood of Christ alone, in Romans 3, without any question of law-keeping whatever. It is wholly apart from law. There is more than this further on. But it is important to know that the believer in Jesus is not only cleared of every charge of sin, but the righteousness of God is actually upon him by virtue of the blood alone. Such wonderful value does God attach to the blood of His beloved Son. Examine the passage closely and with simplicity, and you will see this is the case.

How then is this? If we look at the blood of Christ as that which averts wrath only from the sinner, it would be inexplicable. But there is infinitely more in the blood of Christ than the averting of wrath and judgment. The sinner's need is not the only thing Christ had in view in offering Himself a sacrifice on the cross. Not only the sinner's need was in question, but also the glory of God. Through the presence of sin in His creation down here, God's law, justice, government, throne and righteousness were ignored; His majesty and holiness were slighted; His character was in question. All this was in view when Christ offered Himself. He not only met the sinner's need, but also glorified God in every particular, making His righteousness and glory to shine forth as the noonday. The blood has not only secured redemption from guilt for the sinner, but it has vindicated God's character in the presence of sin in the most glorious way. The righteousness and holiness and unsullied glory of the throne have been sealed with blood. The blood is on the throne as its eternal vindication against sin. Thus it is that God finds such a motive in the blood of Christ. His righteousness has become debtor to the blood and sacrifice of Christ, if I may so speak. He has glorified God, and "If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself." John 13:32.

For God to glorify Him is righteousness. There was a demand on the righteousness of God by the work of Christ on the cross. And so the righteousness of God was displayed in raising Christ from the dead and setting Him on the throne of glory. But that is not all. The righteousness of God is further displayed in justifying everyone who believes in Jesus. In virtue of the blood, the believing sinner gets complete clearance from his guilt and sins, and also is clothed in the righteousness of God. As a sinner redeemed by blood, I am brought into the presence of God, and there stand, all covered over with the righteousness of God. I am under it as a shelter. The same justice that administers the fatal stroke to my Substitute on the cross is now on my side, and shelters me, a justified sinner, forever in the presence of God. Not only so, but God's righteousness as a quality or character belonging to Himself is upon me as His gift (Rom. 3:22 and 5:17). Such is the righteousness of God revealed for the sinner, and secured to him by the blood of Christ.

In Romans 4 there is another aspect of righteousness - imputed righteousness. It is not the righteousness of God imputed, nor the righteousness of Christ; but it is the believer imputed, or reckoned, righteous by faith. It is not so much righteousness set over to the sinner's account, but it is the believing sinner accounted righteous while he is not righteous, but unrighteous, ungodly. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The person is ungodly, but he is reckoned as in a state of righteousness. The basis on which God could do this is the blood of Christ. Because of what God has found in that, He reckons every believer righteous.

In the end of the fourth chapter there is something more than there is in the third chapter. In the third there is only blood shedding, and the display of God's righteousness on that basis - for the justification of the believing sinner. In the end of the fourth chapter there is not only death but resurrection. "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."

If I look in the third chapter I have there blood shedding for my justification. But in the fourth there is more. I have Him who shed His blood risen again, so that I have not only His blood before God as my full clearance from sins, but I have Himself, risen as the triumphant Conqueror over death, sin, and Satan. Thus I have not only clearance from sins, but I am set in the cleared place through His resurrection.

In the fifth chapter there is another aspect of righteousness which is very different. In the Greek there is an entirely different word used, and which can hardly be expressed with exactness by any word in the English. In this chapter we have the two heads with their respective families - Adam and his family, Christ and His family. It is the disobedient one, and the obedient One; the one offense, and the one righteousness.

Adam by one offense - one act of disobedience-involved his whole family in ruin. Christ by one righteousness -one unbroken act of obedience - secured a standing righteousness before God for all His family. By Adam's one act, his whole family were constituted sinners; by Christ's one act, His whole family were constituted righteous. This one act of Christ's includes His whole work in life and in death. The first Adam was tested, and by one act fell. The last Adam also was tested during a life of over thirty-three years. We know well what an awful test it was-a test which ended in the bearing of sins, and in atonement drinking the awful cup God had filled for Him. But He stood the test from the first to the last. Obedience was not suspended for one moment. Every act, word, and thought from first to last was obedience, so that His whole life and death are looked at as one unbroken act of obedience. And this unbroken obedience is looked at in contrast with Adam's one offense.

Because of Adam's one offense, he and his whole family fell. Because of Christ's one unbroken act of obedience for thirty-three years, He stands accepted before God, and all His family stand accepted in Him according to the perfection of that one righteousness. His Whole life, but especially His death, went up as a sweet savor to God. As the second Man, the last Adam, He stands accepted according to the perfection, the sweet savor, that God found in all those years of unbroken obedience sealed with His blood under the fire of divine judgment against sin. The believer stands accepted in the same, and according to the same measure. He becomes possessed of this, not by its being imputed to him, not by its being transferred from Christ to him, but by his becoming one with Christ through faith-by his being taken out of Adam, and put in

Christ, and thus getting a standing before God as one with Him, a part of Himself, so to speak. It is not righteousness transferred from Christ to a sinner in Adam, but a sinner in Adam transferred by faith from Adam into Christ, and consequently into the righteousness in which Christ stands before God.

I wish to notice two other passages. The first is 1 Cor. 1:30, "But of Him [God] are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness," etc. In this passage Christ Himself is our righteousness. The Corinthians had been making much of man, were walking according to men (chap. 3:3, margin). It was, "I am of Paul," etc. The Apostle shows them (chap. 1) how that God had brought man to naught in the cross, how He had judged all flesh there, and set it aside forever, "that no flesh should glory in His presence." If then God made nothing of man, what had these Corinthians - what has any of us - before God? None but Christ. We have Him for wisdom, righteousness, etc. In virtue of being in Him, He is our righteousness before God. It is a higher character of righteousness than that in Romans 5, blessed as that is.

In the one case it is His work; in the other, it is Himself.

The other passage is 2 Cor. 5:21. "For He [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made [become] the righteousness of God in Him." Here it is not the believer accepted according to Christ's work, as in Romans 5, nor yet Christ, the righteousness of the believer before God; but it is the believer becoming the righteousness of God in Him. It is what he becomes in Christ. It is in Christ, not apart from Him. Christ is the perfect expression of God's character. Christ on the throne is the expression of God's righteousness there. So the Holy Spirit convicts the world of righteousness because He had gone to the Father (John 16). It was righteous in God to set Him on the throne, and He is there as the expression of that righteousness. But the believer through grace is in Him, and looked at as a part of Himself, so that he also becomes the expression of God's righteousness in Him. "As He is, so are we in this world." What marvelous grace! Made the righteousness of God in Him! This is of God. God made Christ the expression of what we are. He made Him to be sin on the cross. What are we but a mass of sin? And God made Christ the expression of this, in order that in Christ He might make us the expression of Himself in His character of righteousness. How manifest this will be when we are in the glory! Christ is the pattern of what we will be then. "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." What a glorious position now belongs to the believer in the righteousness of God in virtue of Christ's work! Surely it calls for praise and adoration from these poor hearts of ours.

Let me sum up what I have said about righteousness:

The righteousness of God is revealed for the sinner in virtue of Christ set forth a propitiation through faith in His blood, and it is upon all who believe.

The believing sinner is justified, and accounted righteous while really he is ungodly.

3) Not only have we clearance from guilt by the blood of Christ, but by His resurrection we are also put in the cleared place.

In virtue of our being in Him, the risen One, the last Adam, we are not only justified from all things, but have also justification of life. This we have through His one righteousness.

By His one righteousness - His obedience unto death - He stands accepted as the last Adam before God; and we, poor sinners who believe, being linked with Him, are constituted righteous - accepted in the same perfection as Himself - in that sweet savor that ever ascended to God from the obedient Man.

God has made Christ our righteousness, and in Him as our righteousness we stand before God. What a robe! Surely it is the best robe!

We become the righteousness of God in Him.

Now then, dear brother, is not all this befitting that holy and righteous God who justifies the sinner? In virtue of this stupendous work accomplished through Christ, does not, if I may so speak, a new and everlasting glory accrue to God - a glory displayed in the last Adam, the Son of God, the Man in the glory, with whom are connected all the ransomed millions of His blood, and in whom man - humanity as a part of Himself - is forever and inseparably linked with God? When the hour of public manifestation comes, what a glorious scene the heavens will then display! Truly it will be glory then! These poor, shriveled up hearts of ours will then be enlarged to their utmost capacity. That lovely Man in the glory - slighted so much now - will then be the glorious center that will draw every eye and every heart, and call forth the praise and adoration of every blood-washed sinner. Oh! why should not He be the only center around whom all such gather now? One gaze upon His blessed face by faith ought to be enough to fix the heart upon Him, forever.

I have thus written long on the subjects you raise in your letter. I do not know that I have expressed myself so as to be understood. It is because I deem the subject of immense importance I have written so lengthily, and because I believe there is a depth of rest and joy, and a holy liberty for work and service in getting to the bottom of it, not otherwise enjoyed.

My desire and prayer to God is that you may understand all clearly as it is in God's Word, and that it may have its due effect upon your heart as one of God's redeemed left down here for a little while to witness for our blessed Lord.

Your affectionate brother in the Lord Jesus,

Suited Ministry

1 Pet. 2:2; 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:11-14

What is the suited ministry for believers generally at the present time?

A scripture often cited in answer to this question is in 1 Peter: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Chap. 2:2. It is contended by many that this means that "milk" is the suited aliment for the young believer. To say nothing of the character of the word used (although it is very difficult of translation), the point in the scripture is simply that, just as newborn babes desire milk, the believer should long for the Word of God.

It is, first, a question of appetite; and second, it tells us that as milk is the proper food for the newborn babe, so is the Word of God for the saint. That is what the Spirit of God teaches us by this scripture; and this is the more evident if we add the words, which are now generally accepted as a part of revelation (see New Translation, J.N.D.)-"that by it ye may grow up to salvation." It is thus by feeding upon the Word of God that we grow, and continue to grow, up to complete salvation.

If we now turn to another passage, we shall obtain further light upon our subject. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as [according to] men?" 1 Cor. 3:2, 3.

It is clear in this case that the Apostle fed these believers with "milk" because of their bad condition; that he deplored the necessity for doing so; and that had they been responding more fully to God's grace and love in redemption he would have fed them with "meat," and not with "milk." To assume therefore that the saints need "milk," is to proceed upon the supposition that they are in a Corinthian state; and to make provision for it, is even to foster the condition which all should deplore. We learn moreover that the ministry suited to one assembly may be entirely unsuited to another; and the question may well be pressed home at such a moment upon the hearts of teachers, whether there has been the sufficient exercise of spiritual discernment as to the state of souls, as a guide to their ministry. Nothing is plainer than that it would be an utter mistake to deal out Ephesian truth to a Corinthian assembly, or Corinthian truth to an Ephesian assembly.

Another scripture may be adduced to aid us in our investigation. Commencing to speak of Melchizedek, the Apostle turns aside to add, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." Heb.

5:11-14; 6:1.

There are several points here which need very earnest attention. The Apostle mourns over the saints' inability to receive the truth he had to communicate. When for the time they had been Christians they might have been teachers, it was necessary to go back to the elements of truth; for they had become such as had need of milk-proof that they were unskillful in the use of the Word, and had become dwarfed in their growth. They were babes still, and hence the fervent exhortation with which chapter 6 opens. In a word, these dear saints were unwilling to go forward; and who that had the mind of Christ could be satisfied with such a condition? What teacher could calmly accept their state, and go on feeding them with milk, as if nothing more were necessary?

Surely we do well to attend to these solemn warning words, for might they not be addressed with equal reason to many believers in this day? Are there not hundreds-no, thousands - who never care for anything beyond the gospel? Sad were it indeed if any saint of God ceased to have fellowship with the glad tidings of the grace of God. That which occupies the heart of God Himself may well occupy the hearts of His people. But this does not involve our feeding on nothing but the gospel or the simplest elements of the truth. By no means; for we need Christ in every character, aspect, and office in which He is presented; and if we fail to recognize this, we shall speedily become as dwarfed as were these Hebrew believers.

It will certainly be replied, "But remember how many newly converted souls there are. These are truly babes, and would you not feed these with 'milk'?" The Word of God is our only guide; and we have two instances, at least, of the way in which the Spirit of God ministers to such.

The epistles to the Thessalonians were written soon after the church there had been formed- both probably within a year after the saints had been turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). And what do we find? In the first epistle we have the return of our blessed Lord presented in every variety of aspect, and this too distinguished from His coming to the world, besides considerable practical instruction for the building up of these saints on their most holy faith.

In the second, the Apostle still goes further, and teaches the full character of the appearing of Christ, the truth of the man of sin, the blessed fact that the Church must be caught away from this scene before this son of perdition is revealed, etc. Now these can scarcely be termed elementary subjects; but they were intended for the instruction and comfort of these "babes," and were indeed necessary to them for the understanding of Christianity.

We have another example in John's first epistle. Dividing the whole family of God into fathers, young men, and babes, in what manner does he address this last class, the youngest of God's children? "Little children," he commences, "it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come," etc. (chap. 2:18). He then proceeds to point out the danger arising from antichrists having already appeared. He puts them on their guard by giving the marks of the antichrist, and leads them to the source of their safety in their having the unction of the Holy One and the Word of God. It is, in fact, a remarkable correspondence with the teaching of Paul in 2 Thessalonians.

Here then we have divine wisdom to guide us in teaching "babes." They must be nourished with the Word of God; they must be fortified against danger by the revelations and warnings which it provides; and they must have a whole Christ-Christ in all that He is in Himself, in all that He is to

God, and in all that He is to them-unfolded, that they may grow thereby up to salvation. This is a very different thing from occupying them with questions and controversies instead of Christ; and it may be added, that the maintenance of simplicity in the manner of instruction is entirely consistent with leading souls on in the knowledge of their portion in Christ, as well as of the dangers of their path. We hesitate not to say, that the falling away of so many young converts, and the yielding of many more to the influences of the world, may be traced back, in many instances, to our failure in supplying them with suited food. Knowing scarcely anything beyond the forgiveness of sins, they have little interest in the Scriptures, and thus the means of their growth and safety are neglected.

The doctrinal order of the epistles enforces the same lesson. Romans would undoubtedly be called the elementary epistle, but how many stop at chapter 5:1? And how many learn the truth of chapter 6? Or if they learn it doctrinally, are there not many who never pass through chapter 7 experimentally, so as to enter upon the enjoyment of the wealth of blessing contained in chapter 8? But Colossians is a stage beyond Romans; and Ephesians is, once again, beyond Colossians; and certain it is that a Philippian Christian cannot be seen in this world without having learned the truth of the first epistles named. Are these divine treasures then to be forever withheld from the saints? Are we to surrender, even for the babes, the truth of death and resurrection with Christ? If so, the foundations of Christianity are gone, and we shall easily-and speedily -fall back to Jewish ground and to a Jewish experience.

May the Lord make us all, whatever our stage of growth, increasingly desirous of following after, if that we may apprehend that for which also we are apprehended of Christ Jesus!

Sunday School Workers

"Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he smith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." John 1:35-37.

"Andrew... first findeth his own brother Simon,... and he brought him to Jesus" (John 1:40-42).

"Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did." John 4:39.

Jesus "went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there He abode. And many resorted unto Him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on Him there." John 1:40-42.

"The chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." John 12:10, 11.

These five scriptures are cited to bring before us the various means which were used in each case to lead souls to believe on the Lord Jesus. And as Sunday School workers I believe it is helpful to look at these records, as they serve as an encouragement to us in the work the Lord has given us to do.

In the first scripture we get John's rapturous exclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God!" This would appear to have been the spontaneous outflow of his heart as he looked upon the Lord Jesus, who so filled his heart that he thus exclaimed concerning Him; and those five memorable words are used to turn two of his disciples to Christ. May not this have a word for us, directing us to more heart occupation with Christ, that our words may come with more telling effect upon our scholars, that they too may follow Jesus?

Then with Andrew we have the character of the true soul winner who seeks out his brother and brings him to Jesus. We are not told much about Andrew, but the little we have recorded gives us to see that he went out of his way to find souls. It was he who discovered the little boy in John 6. There are those whom we might be able to seek out and bring personally to Jesus. Many a soul who listens to the weekly message may need a personal word, and may have difficulties which will only be discovered by this individual dealing. May the Lord give us discernment and heart for this work among our scholars.

In the woman of Samaria we get a lovely example of the full overflowing confession of Christ from a soul that is fresh in its love to Him. She goes to those who had known her in sin, and speaks of Him so that many of the Samaritans believed on Him. This surely is a blessed example of the first love of a newborn soul. Ah! how much do we know of this? How soon our love cools down, and our ardor too! The Lord had to complain of this in His message to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2. "Thou hast left thy first love." What a comfort His love has not cooled, but it is only as we abide in the sunshine of His love that our hearts will burn, and we too shall be able to testify in

a way which will reach those we long to see saved.

The verses in John 10 have been a real cheer to my heart in connection with the work among the children. "Many believed on Him there." Why was that? Oh, it is full of encouragement! "John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true." John was but a voice, telling of Jesus. He did no miracle, nothing to make people wonder or applaud his work, but what he said was true; and after many days it bore fruit. John may have thought his work was in vain. We know he did get discouraged, and yet the wondrous result - "many believed on Him there"-is attributed to his faithful message. Let us take heart and see to it that all things we speak of this Man are true, sowing the good seed of the Word; and it may be we shall find as John did, that our labor was not in vain, and that "many believed on Him there."

The last scripture shows what a power there is in a miracle. Lazarus had been dead, but the life-giving word of Christ had given him life, and he is a living witness to this fact; and by reason of him many believed on Jesus.

May we never forget that we are miracles of divine grace! Did not the voice of Christ speak to us when we were dead in sins, and give us life? May the children see that this is so, and that our lives as well as our words are a definite witness to Christ! And so by reason of us many may believe on Jesus.

Taking the Lowest Place

In Matthew 20 the Lord takes occasion to explain the sentiments that become His followers, the perfection of which they had seen in Himself. In the world, authority was sought for; but the spirit of Christ was a spirit of service, leading to the choice of the lowest place, and to entire devotedness to others. Beautiful and perfect principles, the full bright perfection of which was displayed in Christ. The renunciation of all things, in order to depend confidently on the grace of Him whom we serve, the consequent readiness to take the lowest place, and thus be the servant of all - this should be the spirit of those who have part in the kingdom as now established by the rejected Lord. It is this that becomes His followers.

Observe the way in which the sons of Zebedee and their mother come to seek the highest place, at the moment when the Lord was preparing unreservedly to take the very lowest. Alas! we see much of the same spirit! The effect was to bring out how absolutely He had stripped Himself of everything. These are the principles of the heavenly kingdom; perfect self-renunciation, to be contented in thorough devotedness; this is the fruit of love that seeks not her own - the yieldingness that flows from the absence of self-seeking; submission when despised; meekness and lowliness of heart. The spirit of service to others is that which love produces at the same time as the humility which is satisfied with this place. The Lord fulfilled this even unto death, giving His life as a ransom for many.

That Fox

Luke 13:32

The Herodians sought to entangle Jesus, leading Him to commit Himself to the power of the state, then in the hands of the Romans, whose creature Herod, the patron of their party, was. They did this stealthily. They affected to know Him as One that regarded not the person of man; they put a question to Him about which conscience might be uneasy-the conscience of a Jew- as though they craved instruction and guidance (see Matt. 22).

This was hypocrisy, and so the Lord calls it.

The question was such as might easily lead to a perplexity. "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"

There was great confusion in the land at that time; Caesar's power was in the place and among the people that belonged to God. The question intimated that, and that was confusion. That was not as it ought to have been, or as it would have been, had God's people been true to Him.

Jesus, however, did not reason upon this confusion, or contend with it; He taught, rather, that it was to be yielded to by the people; for Israel's duty, taught them of old by His Spirit in their prophets, and now by His lips in the midst of them, in a day of bondage or captivity, is to accept the punishment of their sins; and if this present confusion in the land, Caesar's power in God's place, was, as it must have been, the fruit of their sin, they must now accept that state as their punishment, bow to it, and not resist it or struggle with it. He only guards the application of this principle by a rehearsing of God's claims also. "Render... unto Caesar," says the Lord, "the things which are Caesar's: and unto God the things that are God's."

This reminds me of Numbers 14. If Israel have brought forty years pilgrimage upon themselves, it is not for them to seek to have it otherwise by a desperate effort on their own behalf, or a struggle to free themselves of the wages or penalty of their transgression. Let them rather bow their heads, and begin their pilgrimage humbled, and not go up the hill and seek to force the enemy.

Thus, on this occasion of the Herodians in Matthew 22, the Lord answers them; and the words of His lips now are in beautiful concord with the words of His Spirit in His prophets of old.

But here let me add, Jesus did not fear Herod. His enemies thought that He must either speak or act unworthy of Himself, by fearing Herod, or else commit Himself to Herod's power, by defying him. But He does neither the one nor the other. The snare is broken, as it had been in

John 8. There, Jesus neither impugned the law nor condemned the guilty. The snare was broken.

But Jesus, again I say, did not fear Herod. His words in Luke 13 let us know this, if we need a witness. There He calls him a "fox," a fitting title for him, as we read in Lam. 5:18. "Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it." Herod was one who had taken advantage of Zion's sorrow. Israel was dethroned. Her enemies had got the upper hand; and

Herod, the creature of the enemy, the ally and flatterer of Caesar, had made his gains by her misery. He was walking upon the mountain, or in the high places, of Zion, because of her desolations. He had played the fox, instead of mourning over the wastes of Israel; he had made his own gain out of their poverty.

The Lord did not fear him. He exposes him in the due time and place. But all with Him was beautiful in its season. He will own Caesar's place in the land, and Herod's as under Caesar, in the day of Matthew 22; but if threatened as by Herod's name or power in Luke 13, He can and will

let it be known, that He did not fear him.

But further as to Herod. He was at that moment also playing the fox; for, according to this same scripture, Luke 13, Jesus as the Heir would have gathered Israel; and Herod, seeking the death of such a One, may surely and rightly be named a fox.

Jesus was the Feeder of the flock of slaughter; Herod a possessor, a slayer, a sales-master, a shepherd that did not pity-in the language of another prophet, who thus strikingly, under the Holy Ghost, anticipated these days of Jesus and of Herod. (See Zech. 11:4, 5.)

Simon the Magician and the Ethiopian Eunuch: Two Men and the Same Gospel

We are furnished, in Acts 8, with a very vivid and instructive contrast between the magician of Samaria and the eunuch of Ethiopia. Let us contemplate these two characters for a few moments and seek to bear away some wholesome instruction.

The passage opens with a record of Philip's preaching in Samaria. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." Blessed theme! - the only one for the true preacher! "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.... And there was great joy in that city." Thus it must ever be. When Christ is preached, and people give heed and receive the tidings, "great joy" must be the result. The business of the preacher is to preach Christ; the business of the people is to give heed and believe. Nothing can be simpler.

But alas! all this brightness was speedily overcast with the dark clouds which self-seeking is ever sure to produce. It was all simple and happy, fresh and bright, while Christ was exalted, and souls were blessed by the knowledge of salvation. "But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one." Here then was something quite different - something which the inspired historian might well introduce with a "But." In place of the herald of salvation exalting Christ, it was a poor worm exalting himself; and instead of people made happy by the truth, it was a people bewitched with sorcery.

Simon gave out that himself was some great one, and the popular voice was in favor of his pretensions. "To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God." It generally happens that those who put forth the loftiest claims are sure to get a high place in the thoughts of men. It does not matter how slender the basis of such claims may be; the multitude never thinks much about foundations - about what is beneath the surface or behind the scenes. Their thoughts are superficial. They are easily deceived by a pretentious style. The swaggering and boastful make way in the crowd; whereas the humble, the unpretending, the modest and retiring, are consigned by the men of this world to obscurity and oblivion. Hence the Blessed One who emptied Himself, and made Himself of no reputation, had not where to lay His head, was deliberately given up for a robber and a murderer, and nailed to an ignominious cross between two thieves.

But Simon the magician gave out that himself was some great one, and the pompous claims of this self-important individual were readily admitted by a credulous multitude. "To him they had regard." Why? Was it because he sought to benefit them by the strenuous efforts of a large-hearted benevolence, or to elevate them by the resources of a commanding genius? Not at all. What then? "Because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries." Such is man - such is the world.

However, the tide was turned in Samaria by the introduction of the gospel. "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."

Now be it noted here that we do not raise the question as to whether Simon was really a converted man, or only a hypocritical professor. We can learn a most practical and seasonable lesson from his history without ever touching that question. Simon was a self-seeker from first to last. His object was to exalt Simon. At first he made use of magic for the attainment of his end; and when the tide of Christian profession rose and carried away the pedestal on which he had raised himself, he embraced the new thing. He placed himself on the bosom of the tide, not as one seeking rest for a broken heart and convicted conscience, but as one seeking to be something.

It is evident from the inspired narratives that Simon was more occupied with the wonders and signs by which the gospel was accompanied and confirmed, than by the consolations which the gospel was designed to impart. It was not in his case a heart filled with peace by the grace of the gospel, but a mind filled with wonder by the miracles that were done. He "wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done." It was on these he fixed his wondering gaze. The things which were designed to call the attention of the heart to Christ were looked at by Simon as things whereby self might be exalted. In this way Christianity might furnish materials for a more solid pedestal for self than even the magic and sorcery in which he had formerly traded.

All this comes out more clearly when the Holy Ghost appears upon the scene. "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

What a deeply solemn picture! What a holy lesson! Self-seeking must ever lead to bitterness. It matters not whether it be exemplified in the case of a converted or an unconverted person. Everyone who seeks to exalt self - to be somebody - to figure before the eye of his fellow, must, sooner or later, reap bitterness and gall. It cannot be otherwise. We may set it down as a fixed principle that in proportion as self is our object will bitterness be the result. Had Simon found his object in the Christ whom Philip preached, he never would have been called to hearken to Peter's appalling words. His heart would then have been "right in the sight of God." It is only when Christ is really the object that the heart is right in the sight of God; but so thoroughly wrong was Simon - so completely away from God, and from Christ, and from the Holy Ghost - that when exhorted by the Apostle to pray to God if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven, "Then answered

Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." Instead of confessing his sin, he asks others to pray that he might not be called to suffer its consequences.

Here the curtain drops upon Simon. May the lesson conveyed in his history be engraved on our hearts! May the Lord, in His great mercy, give us full deliverance from self-seeking, and fill our hearts with the love of His name!

We shall now turn and gaze upon a totally different picture. "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet."

Here the contrast strikes us at once. Instead of a sorcerer, on the strength of his magic and witchcraft, giving out that himself was some great one, we have a man of real authority, rank, weight, and dignity, looking away from himself and his position, to find the object of his worship and adoration. He was one of the great ones and had no need to give himself out as such; but instead of being occupied with himself or his greatness, his soul was thirsting after something above and beyond himself and all around. He had gone from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, still evidently unsatisfied.

All this is intensely interesting. We are glad to get away from the self-seeking Simon, to be in company with the Christ-seeking eunuch. It is truly refreshing to look at that earnest, solitary man, poring over the prophetic page in search of an object for his heart. We may feel assured it was a sight in which heaven was interested. An angel was dispatched to Samaria, in order to summon the evangelist from the stirring scenes of service there, and send him into the solitudes of the desert Gaza, to address himself to a single individual. How remarkable that two such men as Simon and the eunuch should be placed in juxtaposition by the inspired penman! They form a contrast throughout. Philip found the one bewitching the people with sorcery, and giving out that himself was some great one. He found the other earnestly engaged in the study of the Word of God. He found the one amid all the bustle and throng of the city, figuring before the world, and endeavoring to make capital for himself out of anything and everything. He found the other in the solitude of the desert, returning from worshiping at Jerusalem to his proper sphere of duty in Ethiopia. Thus far, they were perfect opposites.

But let us pursue the narrative of this interesting and highly favored Ethiopian. It might seem strange to Philip to be called away from such a brilliant field of service in Samaria, where such crowds flocked to hear, into a desert where he could hardly expect to meet anyone. To whom was he to preach there? Nature might reason thus; but Philip did as he was told, and he was not left long in ignorance as to his work. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither." How simple! How sweetly servant-like! It is all the same to a right-minded servant whether he is sent to a city or to a desert, to a crowd or to a single individual. The Master's will settles everything. Would that we knew more of this! Would that we tasted more of the deep and real blessedness of doing our appointed work under the immediate eye of our Lord, totally regardless as to the sphere and character of that work. We may be called to stand

before assembled thousands, or to make our way in obscurity from lane to lane, to deliver the message in crowded halls, or to drop a word into the ear of some poor dying creature in the ward of a hospital. It would be quite the same to us, were we only gifted with the true spirit of a servant. The Lord grant us more of this!

"Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him." The Lord knows how and when to make the preacher and hearer cross each other's path, and when they meet, a link is formed which never can be broken. There were those in Jerusalem who could have poured the glad tidings into the eunuch's ear; but God so ordered it that Philip was to enjoy the privilege of conducting this stranger to the feet of Jesus, and by His gracious providence they met amid the solitude of the desert of Gaza.

And only note the passage of Scripture on which the eunuch's eye was resting when Philip accosted him. "The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before His shearer, so opened He not His mouth: in His humiliation His judgment was taken away: and who shall declare His generation? for His life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."

Here was the profoundly interesting question. Who was this mysterious "He"? Blessed inquiry! The eunuch did not ask Philip to expound the text. Ah! no; he longed for something far deeper than this. He wanted to know something about this wondrous Person who was led as a sheep to the slaughter. This was all he asked. Who could this Person be? It was Jesus. Happy eunuch! He had at length reached his object. He had gazed on the precious page of inspiration and found there the record of "the Lamb of God" led to the cursed tree, and bruised under the righteous hand of a sin-hating God. And for whom? Why, for him - for any poor burdened one who would only come and trust the shelter of His atoning blood. Such was the glorious object presented to the eye and the heart of this earnest Ethiopian. The grand foundation truth of the gospel - the doctrine of the blood, of a sin-bearing Christ broke with divine fullness and power upon his soul. There was no astounding miracle or sign - nothing outward to add authority to the truth proclaimed. There was no need. The word came with power. The ground was good and duly prepared for the precious seed. The eunuch's earnest seeking had issued in a joyful finding. The sinner and the Savior had met-faith linked them together, and all was settled.

"And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?... And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

Thus then we see how that from first to last the eunuch of Ethiopia stands in most striking contrast with the magician of Samaria. And no doubt these two men represent two great classes; namely, those who are occupied with self, and those who are occupied with Christ. Simon's object was self, and his end "bitterness." The eunuch's object was Jesus, and his end "rejoicing."

To Those Who Know the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ

It is the happy portion of every Christian to know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Man by nature knows not this grace; his every thought is foreign to it. Sin made man a coward and a stranger from God, and his innate thoughts are that God is a hard master. He is, as the poet so aptly expressed it, "A stranger to grace and to God." Grace is not only unknown but unwanted. It is strangely sad that man should be so desperately in need of grace and yet be a total stranger to it, while all the time the heart of God is yearning to show grace. But there are those who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious"; they have touched, as it were, the hem of His garment and found an exhaustless river of grace flowing forth. Every true Christian knows the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"; he may not know much of its soundless depths, but unless he knows that grace he is lost, in his sins, and on the road to the pit. So then, we may divide mankind into two classes: those who know that grace and are saved, and those who do not. He who knows it can joyfully sing those well-known words:

"Grace is the sweetest sound

That ever reached our ears;

When conscience charged and justice frowned,

'Twas grace removed our fears."

Thus the Spirit of God, by the Apostle, addresses these words to us: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. 8:9. Each child of God is embraced in "ye know." And fellow Christian, what grace it was that opened our poor blind eyes and hard hearts to lay hold of His grace - grace that met us where we were in our dire need. And note whose grace is here spoken of: "our Lord Jesus Christ." Him whom we have owned as our Lord - that One to whom we belong. And has it been a hardship? far be the thought. The Apostle spoke very affectionately of "Christ Jesus my Lord." The beloved Apostle was an old man in prison for his Lord's sake when he wrote those words to the Philippian saints; was his service hard? no, Paul gloried in it, he loved it.

Then take the next word of this verse - "Jesus" - and see what memories it brings to our hearts. Yes, "Jesus the name we love so well!" The name of that blessed One who came from heaven and trod the pathway on earth. How we delight to trace His footsteps in the gospels - every step showing divine perfection on earth, and yet He was truly man.

It is the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Yes, "God has made that same Jesus... both Lord and Christ." Christ means "anointed." He is God's anointed One. He is now seated in heaven at God's right hand, and God views us who know His grace as being in Him there. Oh, what a place of favor! All our blessings are in Christ. Yes, dear Christian, we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, but how are we to gauge that grace? read on: "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor."

First we must ask the question, How rich was He? Such a question plunges us into thoughts of His glory that amaze and astonish. His riches include all His glory in deity. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Can we poor finite creatures comprehend that? No. Go back before Genesis 1, go back before the world was, back as far as the mind can go; and when you get there, He "was" there, and He "was God." "All things were created by Him, and for Him." There is no single exception; all was created by Him and for Him. Go through the Word of God and you will find many verses which tell of His riches. He speaks through Isaiah the prophet, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." Yes, He "was rich"; not as man saw Him in His pathway on earth. Here He was with the poor and, according to men's standards, He was poor. We never read of the Lord having had a piece of money. He came into the world in the stable of an inn. He was laid in one man's manger, and when He was to leave the world, He was placed in another man's tomb. Surely when Scripture speaks of His having been rich, it refers to all that He had before He became a man.

Then we see Him becoming poor. If His riches excelled all, so His poverty was greater than all. From the very highest, He went to the very lowest From the "form of God" to the "form of a servant" and "the likeness of men." Down, down, down He came and did not stop until He had gone to "death," and lower than that - "the death of the cross." Lower He could not go; higher He could not have been. The "cross," that death reserved for the lowest, for slaves and the meanest of criminals - such was the Roman thought of death on a cross. And what was the Jews' thought? It was formed by Scripture, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree."

And when we think of the shame, ignominy, and suffering of the cross, let us not forget those three awful hours of darkness, when the sun refused to shine - from 12 noon to 3 o'clock in the afternoon. It was in those three terrible hours that the blessed Lord

Jesus was made sin for us-

"What shame, what grief,

what joy we prove

That He should die for us!

Our hearts were broken by that cry-

'Eli, lama sabachthani?' "

It was the bearing of our sins in His own body on the tree that forced from His blessed lips those awful words, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Such then, dear saints of God, is the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" in coming from the highest height to the very lowest depth; and why? "for your sakes." Does not this touch something in your heart and mine? Yes, for our sakes He came where we were; for our sakes He became a man and went into death and there was made sin - "the Just for the unjust." Our condition was so bad that such a great descent was necessary to pick us up; nothing short of such coming down would have met our case. Yes,

"Rich in glory, Thou didst stoop,

Thence is all Thy people's hope."

And was His grace only displayed in coming all the way down to where we lay in order to cleanse us from our sins? No, no, no; that would not have been "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." His grace will not stop until it has us with Him in glory - "that ye through His poverty might be rich." He came from the highest to the lowest, and He lifts us up from that low place where He found us, to the heights of heaven. There we shall be, not as beggars, not as strangers, but there with and like Himself, far above angels. We cannot comprehend the riches that He had, nor the poverty to which He came; and we cannot fully know the pit we were in, nor lay hold of the glory that shall be ours. Yes, that "ye through His poverty might be rich." Well may we add the words of the poet,

"Thou wast poor that we might be

Rich in glory, Lord, with Thee."

The Three Taverns: the Appian Way Station

Along the famous Appian Way paved road that ran from ancient Rome to the Bay of Naples, many processions had traveled. Over it mighty conquerors made their way victoriously to the great city, bringing along captives and other tokens of victory. About the year 63 A.D. two little companies of Christians could be seen making their way (very likely on foot) from the world metropolis toward the sea. One company went as far as "The Three Taverns," about thirty-three miles from Rome, while the other went on about ten miles farther to "Appii-Forum."

History gives a rather dark picture of the conditions along the road, and the bad reputation of the two named stations on it. What were these early Christians traveling along this road for? Was it to meet some great personage, some mighty conqueror? What motive prompted them to make what was in those days such a long hard trip? It was love that took them forward on that journey. The news had reached them that the Apostle Paul, with Luke and Aristarchus, had arrived the week before at Puteoli, a city on the Bay of Naples. When they landed they found "brethren" there and, as they desired, Paul and his party remained one week with them.

It was springtime now, after a strenuous and hazardous winter. Paul the prisoner, and his friends, the soldiers, and other prisoners had started for Rome the fall before; and after a terrible storm in the Mediterranean, the ship was wrecked and they were stranded on the Island of Malta. Now at last the great Apostle to the Gentiles was approaching the great and wicked city of Rome. This was his first trip to Rome; he had often longed to go there, as he says in the letter he wrote to the Roman Christians. We do not know how the gospel was carried to them, but the Apostle Paul had not done it, and as far as we know, no other apostle had either. God had ordered it that others should carry His glad tidings to Rome.

That precious bond that unites all the children of God was surely felt and manifested in this touching scene. Paul loved the dear saints whom he had not seen, and they loved him. Many of them had not long before been pagan worshipers of false gods, without God and without love for His people. Now they were drawn together by the same Spirit. Paul had written to them, "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." Rom. 1:11, 12.

He had written this perhaps about three years before, just previous to his arrest in Jerusalem. At that time he did not know that when he did go to see them, he would go as a prisoner.

Now the time that Paul looked forward to had arrived - he was approaching Rome where there were many who were dear to him. How would they treat him, a prisoner? Would they welcome him? He did not have to wait until he reached the city to find out and see evidence of love and affection. Prisoner or no, when they heard he was coming, many of the saints took up their journey to meet him en-route and escort him to the city. To the teeming multitudes of the great city Paul was nothing, but no greater person ever traveled that road - he, the greatest servant the Lord ever had - the great Apostle of the Gentiles, although a prisoner under military guard.

Paul had desired to be a help to them, and to be comforted and encouraged by the faith in them; thus they would encourage each other. How sweet and precious the fact that each is a member in that one body, and each has his own particular place to fill, and his own function to perform.

No one doubts that Paul would be a great help to those dear saints at Rome, but notice how he was first helped and encouraged by them. In Acts 28:15 we read that when Paul saw those fellow members of the one body, "He thanked God, and took courage." No doubt Paul had natural fears and dread as he approached that great city for his trial before Caesar. The ordeals of his trials in Jerusalem and Caesarea had not been effaced from his memory. He had suffered much for Christ in both cities; and in Jerusalem the Lord stood by him one night and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." Acts 23:11.

And when he and all on board ship had been in that terrible storm for many days "an angel of God" stood by him at night and said, "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Acts 27:24. But this time as Paul neared Rome the Lord did not appear, but used His people to strengthen and encourage him. How touching is that scene along the Appian Way! as Paul, with Luke and Aristarchus, came along the road to receive a loving embrace and words of comfort and cheer. Perhaps never before or since was such a scene enacted on that Roman paved road. Surely God looked down on them that day, and it was He who was using fellow-Christians to comfort and strengthen His faithful and wearied servant.

And, fellow-Christian, have we not each and all opportunities to encourage one another? Which of us have not at some times felt the need of a word in season to lift up hands that hang down? And if we have such times, so have all the rest of the saints. And if we have received such cheer, may we not desire to be able to render it to others? Yes, even Christ's greatest servant needed and received words and acts of encouragement, for which he thanked God.

Till He Come

Part 1

"As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." 1 Cor. 11:26.

How sweetly solemn and impressive was that simple yet beautiful thing which the Lord Jesus desired of His people before He, suffered; and how calculated it was to touch the hearts of all those who knew the value of His precious blood. It was at the supper of the Passover where He made the request, on the night in which He was betrayed.

He was eating with His disciples, when He took bread and gave thanks and brake it and gave it to them, saying, "Take, eat; this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me." "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you." (1 Cor. 11:24; Luke 22:19, 20.)

They had been with Him for some time, He having left His throne of glory to come into the world and die for them; but now He was about to leave them for a little while, and He did not wish to be forgotten by them, but would have His dying love kept continually before their souls, because His death would be to them everlasting life, as well as the foundation of every joy and blessing they would have, either in this world or in that which is to come. He knew what poor things they were and how prone they would be to forget. Therefore His desire was that they should remember Him in this simple way while He was absent from them.

How tender and loving this was; it was just like Himself; and it shows also how very much He valued their affections. Though He was going back to His Father to enjoy the glory which He had with Him before this world was, yet this great desire that they should not forget Him seemed nearer to His heart than all beside (Luke 22:15-20). And how sweet it is to know that He is still the same, and that it gives Him joy up there to be remembered in this way by His loved ones down here. He also knew it would add to their joy too, by keeping their hearts fresh and true to Himself, separate from the world.

Therefore He gave the same words to the Apostle Paul out of the glory, where He is now, as He said, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." 1 Cor. 11:23-26.

Now we know that the only place where the Apostle Paul saw the Lord Jesus was up there. He was a bitter persecutor of both Him and His people for some time after the Lord died and rose again. He even haled to prison and to death all them that called upon His name.

But after his conversion he was taken up into heaven, whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell. And there it was he saw things which it was impossible to utter; and there, no doubt, it was that he received of the Lord that which he delivered unto us.

The Lord gave the same unchanging request from the glory which He made with His people when He was here upon earth. And we see how gladly the early Christians acted upon it. They met together on the first day of the week for this one object (Acts 20:7).

They gave praise, and worship, and thanksgiving to God at the same time, also words of exhortation and comfort to each other. But the great object of their coming together was to break bread, and thus fulfill the dying request of their Lord and Master, without whose death there never could have been one bright ray before their souls, either here or in the countless ages of eternity.

The broken bread showed forth His body given for them, and they all ate of it; the poured out wine showed forth His precious blood, and they all drank of it, according to His word. They loved Him, and their great delight was thus to remember Him in the way He desired they should.

They met too as one family - not one above another, but as brethren, as well as members of the one body. The little child of yesterday had the privilege of remembering the Lord at His table, the same as those that had known and loved Him from the beginning. But, of course, these had grown up into Him, and thereby were in a position to exhort and help those who were newly brought into the family. Still, the weakest and feeblest believer had his happy place there, the same as those who had known the joy of it for years.

But it is very important to remember that it is the Lord's table, and therefore only one table, whether it be here, or in different parts of the world. Yet it is only one, because the body is one and the loaf is one, and the Lordship of Christ must be owned, and nothing allowed which is not consistent with His holiness and love (1 Cor. 10:21).

No unconverted person should be at that table, whatever his standing in the world might be; it was only for those who loved Him - those who knew that they were washed from their sins in His own blood, and whose delight and joy it was to remember Him and what He had done for them. And however great their weakness, yet they were able to say with Peter, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

None had a right to please themselves there, or speak their own words, or do their own will in anything. It is not only called the Lord's table in Scripture, but it is also called the Lord's supper, and the Lord's cup, which His people drink, the communion of the blood of Christ. It is the Lord's death that they show forth; and it is the Lord's day on which they do it; and it is the Lord's people alone who can do it; and it is His desire that they should do it till He come. It is altogether His, and His alone; and His holiness and glory must be maintained at all cost.

The Lord the Spirit also is there, not to intimidate, but to fill every heart with joy and gladness, and to give foretastes of that coming day when they shall see Him who died for them, and drink the new wine with Him in His Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29).

It is purely a family circle and a family feast; and every one belonging to that heavenly family should be there, and no other. For anyone to be at the Lord's table who is living in sin is of all things the most sad, and the Lord will judge it sooner or later. In the church at Corinth many were

weak and sickly, and many slept; they were even taken away by death because of allowed evil (1 Cor. 11:29-33).

It has always been a principle with God that He would be sanctified in them that came near Him (Lev. 10:3). And it is the same today; therefore evil of every kind must be judged or God will judge it. Christ cannot have fellowship with iniquity; neither can there be real communion and joy in the Lord where the Holy Ghost is grieved.

Not that God's people will ever be perfect in the flesh. Weakness and infirmity will attend their steps all the time they are down here. But if they confess their sins, God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins, and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). This is a very different thing from their knowingly allowing evil of any kind to be in their midst, whether it be of doctrine or of conduct, whether it be in themselves or others.

How can such show forth the Lord's death? or how can they worship God? There is no fellowship between light and darkness - between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.

A mixed multitude, consisting of believers and unbelievers, professing to remember the Lord's death, is the greatest confusion and evil. The mere professor has no place at the Lord's table. What he needs is the gospel, that he might know the forgiveness of sins, and the cleansing power of that precious blood. This will enable him to say with the Apostle, Who "loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Then he can truly remember the Lord's death with joy and gladness, but not before.

The merely being a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, without a proper Christian walk, is no one's title to be there; they must be separated unto God from the things around. God's word calls upon them to examine themselves, and so to eat of that bread and drink of that cup (1 Cor. 11:28, 29).

Separation from evil has always been God's principle of communion. Lot, though a righteous man, was not a separated man; he was in connection with that which he ought not to have been; therefore we never read of God communing with him. Not so with Abraham; God delighted to meet him on every occasion and communicate to him all His purposes (Gen. 18:19).

In the days of Jeremiah we have a beautiful picture of God's path for His people, especially in an evil day like the present. It was a time of great outward profession, but evil was not judged, and the nation of Israel was under judgment on account of it; and some of God's loved ones were mixed up with the evil. In these circumstances, God told Jeremiah to take forth the precious from the vile; then he should be as His mouth. At the same time referring to those who were not doing so, but were going on with it, God said, "Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them" (Jer. 15:19). God would have the line clearly drawn. Jeremiah must keep himself apart from this state of things, but love must never cease.

Then again, in the days of Malachi, we see there were those who could not join hands with the profession that was going on all around, and in which they had been brought up. They could not continue with it, because evil was there; therefore they kept at a distance, and spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard. He bowed down His ear to hear what they said to each other; and a book of remembrance was kept for them (that is, of what they did say). "And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels."

At the same time, while they were down here in suffering and sorrow, He would spare them (or treat them with tenderness) as a father treats with tenderness his own son that serves him; and by the light which He gave them in their lonely path, they could look around and discern between the evil and the good- between him that serves God and him that serves Him not (Mal. 3:16-18).

God's ways are today what they ever were. He has not altered; and His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace. It is our ways which are so crooked, and lead to confusion and anguish. Still if God's people bring themselves into suffering and sorrow, how happy it is to know that His love is like Himself; it is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever"; in Him there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (Heb. 13:8; Jas. 1:17.)

God's unchanging love gives confidence and joy at all times to those whose eyes are single toward Himself, knowing "that all things work together for good to them that love God," however trying they may be, and however lonely their path; and those who have walked with God in all ages have found that they have often had to walk with Him alone.

If God's path for His people in Old Testament times was a path of separation, how much more it is so now, since the Lord Jesus has been rejected and crucified. He died and rose again, and God is uniting believers to Him up there, at His own right hand, giving them one glorious future with His own beloved Son; so that they are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world, but are separated to Himself forever, and soon to be with Him in unsullied glory (Phil. 3:20, 21).

He would therefore have His people very separate from evil at all times, with this blessed hope bright before their souls - the hope of His coming. He is looking on to it with joy Himself, and He would have them do so too. Hence His desire is that they should thus show His death till He come. When they are remembering Him in death, He would have them at the same time be looking forward with joy to His coming again to receive them to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also; and no joy to the believer is like the joy of seeing His face and being with Him.

Then there is also the one loaf, which presents before God the whole body of Christ, according to His word, "For we being many are one bread [or loaf], and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Cor. 10:17.

How happy it is for God's people to know this; therefore, when they come together to remember the Lord, they see the one loaf on the table and know that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is represented by it, let them be wherever they may, because they are one body. This is as true today as ever it was, though many of the members of that body do not know it; they are scattered hither and thither, connected with that which God cannot be pleased with, and they are great losers by it; still, it does not alter that which God has done according to the love of His own heart. It is He Himself who has given them that blessed position, and He will make it good in everlasting glory. That day will find them out, wherever they are; not one will be missing; the proceedings of the Father's house would be stopped if one were absent; but this we know cannot be. Still, how sweet it is to enter into our blessed portion now and live in the enjoyment of it. By doing so we also honor Him.

Till He Come: Part 2

Part 2

God delights in seeing His people happy, fully conscious of the place of nearness to Himself which He in His kindness and love has made theirs in Christ Jesus; and it is only as they are entering into that happy nearness, and enjoying that love, that they can give Him acceptable worship-worship which God can delight in - worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23; Phil. 3:3).

When a poor, heavy-laden sinner obeys the voice of the Lord Jesus, and comes to Him (Matt. 11:28), he not only gets his load of sin and guilt removed and taken away forever, but he is brought into living union with the very One that removes it; he becomes a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26). He is no longer a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God; he belongs to that heavenly family (Eph. 2:19), and the Father's house is his proper abode (John 14:2). He is no longer of this world, even as Christ is not of this world; but his hopes and interests and his all are bound up with Christ and them that are His (John 17). The Holy Ghost takes up His abode in that saved sinner (1 Cor. 6:19, 20), who is forever separated to God (Rom. 8:39). There was a time when this blessed union was manifested to the world, and God would have it so today; but, alas! it is not.

I have often thought that the present divided and scattered state of the Church of God very much resembles that in which His ancient people Israel were found in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah. Israel was scattered; the ten tribes were lost among the nations; and the temple was in confusion.

But Hezekiah knew they were not lost to God, though they were lost to man. God knew every one of them, and where they were; therefore when Hezekiah had cleansed the house of God, with all its vessels, and had arranged things as far as he could, according to God's word, we find the table of showbread was put in its proper place, according to its ancient order, which was that it should be set before the Lord with its twelve cakes (or loaves) upon it, six in a row; and there was put pure frankincense upon them, that it might be on the bread for a memorial. The loaves were renewed every sabbath day (Lev. 24:5-8).

The twelve loaves (or cakes) represented the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, and the pure frankincense, the sweet savor of Christ, which God ever beheld upon those whom He had brought nigh to Himself.

This Hezekiah knew; therefore he set the showbread table in order before the Lord, and all the other vessels; thus, as it were, reminding God of His people and also of His unchanging love and purposes concerning them (2 Chron. 29:18). Hezekiah then sent messengers to the few which were left, to tell them of what he had done and to invite them to come and take their right place before God, and eat the passover in God's appointed way at Jerusalem, and God would be gracious to them. But they mocked the messengers and laughed them to scorn; nevertheless, divers of them humbled themselves and came (2 Chron. 30:5-11).

How far does this resemble the present state of those whom God has made nigh unto Himself by the precious blood of His own dear Son? Divided they are, and almost hidden in the systems of men; but God has in these last days worked marvelously by His Word and Spirit, and caused a few to see where they were, and to come forth and humble themselves and take their right place at the Lord's table, according to His word (1 Cor. 11:23, 24), fully owning their weakness and failure; but willing to do that which is right and be obedient to Him in all things, knowing that though they have changed, yet He is the same; He changes not.

In the days of Haggai the prophet we have a very encouraging scene brought before us in reference to this state of things. A small remnant of God's people had just returned from a long captivity in Babylon, where God had sent them in chastisement for their disobedience. But they are now brought back again into their own land, and God calls upon them to build His house at Jerusalem, which was in ruin. He told them that He was with them according to the word which He covenanted with the m when they came out of Egypt. So His Spirit remained among them; therefore they were not to fear (Hag. 2:4, 5).

God had chastised them for their sins, as a father does his children, and sent them into captivity over and over again before their enemies, because of their disobedience; still, He Himself remained the same as He ever was. His Spirit had never left them, but was still among them, so that they had nothing to fear, but to do according to His word, and He would be gracious to them and take pleasure in what they did.

So now God has in His goodness and love given some of His people to see where they had gotten through disobedience to His Word; and He has enabled them to turn to Him from the things around, to serve Him, the living and the true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

He has also given them to remember that His Holy Spirit is with His people, having taken up His abode in all them that believe, according to the words of the Lord Jesus when He said, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John 14:16, 17. This is as blessedly true today as it ever was; and all believers are by this one Spirit baptized into one body, of which Christ is the Head, and they are the members (1 Cor. 12:12, 13).

What joy it gives to know this, notwithstanding all that has taken place since the Lord Jesus ascended up on high! The Holy Ghost has never left the Church of God; but He is still down here dwelling in each individual believer, to guide and direct them in all things, especially when they are gathered together in the name of the Lord (see 1 Cor. 14). His delight is to open their understandings, so that they might understand the Scriptures, and so make God's Word clear and plain, and the future bright and glorious to their souls (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit is to

believers now what the Lord Jesus was to His disciples when He was down here. He is that other Comforter-One in all things like Himself. He is also the only true power by which they can worship God. And they get the help and joy of His presence just in proportion as they are subject to Him. He is not seen by men, but to faith is as really present as if He were, and as truly interested in everything that concerns God's people now as the Lord Jesus Himself was when He was

personally among them. Would that we all knew the joy and blessedness of it.

God's people Israel had twelve loaves to represent them before the Lord, because they were twelve distinct tribes, though but one family. But it is not so with believers now; they are all one in Christ Jesus; He is the Head, and they the members; therefore they are but one body and one loaf, as it is also only one table.

How beautifully simple this is; and how plainly it shows that while believers are in different parts of the world, mixed up too with all manner of things, yet, wherever that one loaf is on the Lord's table before God, they are every one of them presented to Him by it! Scattered and divided as they are, still they are by the one loaf shown to be one, and they cannot get away from it, just as Israel could not help being presented before God by the twelve loaves on the showbread table. Though they were buried among the nations, and mixed up with things from which they ought to have been separate, yet God's purposes were not altered, and His Word also remained the same.

So it is now with all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. He died, and by His death gave to them everlasting life; therefore they are one in Him. Their standing is also in Him, however unconscious they are of it. And God beholds the pure frankincense upon them, all the sweetness and preciousness of His own dear Son. They are accepted in the Beloved with all His acceptability, loved as He is loved; their sins are forgiven according to the riches of His grace (John 17:23; Eph. 1:6, 7). "Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. 2:11. He has made them a part and parcel of Himself, "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30). This the one loaf shows forth in the most simple and beautiful way, and blessed are they who know the joy of it.

This oneness of believers with Christ and each other was brought about by His resurrection "from the dead."

As soon as He left the grave, He said to Mary Magdalene, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17).

Never were such words uttered before; indeed, they could not be uttered, because this blessed relationship did not exist till the Lord Jesus died and rose again. He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Luke 12:50. He could not tell them what He so longed that they should know till He had passed through death and resurrection.

But as soon as He left the tomb, then He could tell it out in all its fullness and blessedness, even this glorious truth, that they were now one family; and that which was true of Him was true of them. His interests had become theirs, and His glorious future theirs also. The Lord Jesus in resurrection became the first-born among many brethren (Rom. 8:29). And it was there also that He became the Head of His body, the Church (Eph. 1:19-23).

What a glorious position believers are in! They are associated with Christ forever, and soon will be with Him in eternal glory. It is only the question of a few short days at the most, and then they will see His face and hear His voice, and be with Him, and like Him for evermore (Phil. 3:20, 21).

Believers are now in this little interval between these two great events - the cross and the glory - forever delivered by the one and hastening on to the other; and at any moment they might be called away from this scene, to take their places with Himself in the glory. He "shall change our vile

body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."

May all who know the joy of this blessed hope be kept very true and real for Himself and very separate from this evil world, till He come, never forgetting His parting words, "This do in remembrance of Me." The time is short, the opportunity for faithfulness in a scene like this will soon be over and gone forever. We shall not then have the happy privilege of showing the Lord's death in a world where He has been rejected and crucified. This is one of the greatest testimonies we can bear for Him while He is away, as we thereby show that every blessing and every hope and joy we have come to us through the blood of His Cross.

Treasure in Earthen Vessels

2 Corinthians 4

It is a great thing to remember-what Christians too easily forget - that we are called to the enjoyment of heavenly things, and we live by the revelation of them. God has not introduced grace and His Son and Spirit to make us get along easily in this world - it was not needed - but to bring us to the enjoyment of heavenly things, and to live in them. What characterizes a man is what his mind is on, and then all his ways flow from that.

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

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

Verse 6. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, bath shined in our hearts," etc. That is where every Christian is. The glory of God is revealed in my heart, and I am thus to manifest it in the world, that they should see it in my words and ways and in my gift, if I have one - that all I say and do should give out the light of the knowledge of God in a world of pitch darkness. It has been revealed in our hearts to make it shine out in the dark of this world. It is a blessed place, but a very distinct and definite one. If Christ is revealed, He has brought in the knowledge of God-all the glory of God, His holiness, His majesty, His love, has shined into our hearts - that we may give it out. That is very simple if it were all, but it is not all. It is God's way to put this in an earthen vessel. The Apostle does not speak here of wickedness, but weakness. We have to get the flesh put down, and we get chastening. We know that, but the. Apostle does not go on that

ground here. It is not a question of sin or failure, but of the path of the Christian as such. The first element is, he has the whole glory of God revealed, but in this "earthen vessel, that the excellency of the power may be of God"--constant dependence.

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

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

There are two remedies for this. First, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (v. 10). The Apostle applies it to himself, and that goes very far, though it is not all. But if you applied the cross to every thought that arises in your heart, you would find how many thoughts the cross would crucify. The flesh would never put up a thought at all. What thought could a dead man put up? Of course, we have to be gentle and courteous as Christians; but the old man has been put to death, and I have to reckon myself dead. Here he is carrying it out every day. I might fear there are many here who do not so apply it to every thought and feeling and purpose-who do not so distrust the flesh, and everything in mere human nature. If I let my body live, there is flesh. But he says, I bear about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in my body. In order to manifest Christ always, I hold the flesh dead. That is his part in

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

The fullness of the glory is ours. The glory has shone into our hearts; but He puts it in an earthen vessel, because our hearts have to learn what we are. No will can be allowed- no self-stirring, no flesh, no thought from the vanity of this world can be allowed - nothing that does not suit this treasure. But do not thoughts come into your mind, and are they not allowed there, that do not suit the treasure of heaven? Things that do not take the form of gross evil, but a quantity of things that are not Christ? Take the day's conversation. Has there been no vanity, no idleness? Is your speech "always with grace, seasoned with salt"? If you take up a newspaper and read of the vanities of the world, do you then turn to read of Christ and His glory, and not find your heart dull? If you do not find it out, you may be sure it will get duller and duller. It hinders the preciousness of Christ to you. You have lost power. You do not go and read your Bible and pray with the same freshness. When I apply the cross of Christ, it stops the moving of my heart. The Lord puts me through circumstances that put me to the test. If death came and found me a dead man, what effect would it have? What is killing a dead man? With the Apostle the flesh was kept down, and he was looking to God. He says, "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life"; but we trusted in God, who raised the dead. Would their killing him prevent God's raising him? It would bring it nearer. We can bless God for it. He puts down the flesh that wants putting down. "Death worketh in us, but life in you." Death was working in Paul, and nothing but life worked as regards others. O that it were so with us!

The practical effect of it is, "All things are for your sakes." When self is down, I begin to think the thoughts of God; and everything is for us. I see "all things are yours... life... death... things present... things to come.... And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Do you believe that "all things are for your sakes"? - that all that happens in the world, no matter what the motives that govern men in it, everything is for your sakes? He makes everything work together for your good - every circumstance in your life. They may not be pleasant, but we have not to be occupied with them as the world is. God overrules all. He lets man go on, but makes the wrath of man to praise Him (Psalm 76:10). Peter says, in Acts 2, You, by wicked hands, crucified and slew Him; but it was by the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." We want only to have confidence that He has a purpose, and that purpose is to glorify His Son. Whatever is needed for that, He will do. If my eyes are straightforward to glorify Him, everything goes right. If I go against His path, He will knock me over. If I am in His path, He helps me on; but I must be there with His strength. Paul says, "We faint not." I do not go in my own strength. I may be weary or weak, but it is God. I may be faint in my mind; but "when I am weak, then am I strong." "The inward man is renewed day by day." Dependence is renewed. You never get in the grace of today strength for tomorrow. If I have learned in it more of Christ, it is profit for eternity, of course; but if manna was kept a day it stank - it became self-righteous. You must be dependent every instant (v. 17). Every trouble gives the apprehension of what is to come. Never mind, he says, it is a "light affliction"; the inward man is not touched; it is "renewed day by day"; and we get blessing by these very things.

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

A Word for Tried Ones

A blacksmith, about 8 years after he accepted Christ as his Savior, was approached by an intelligent unbeliever with the question:

"Why is it you have so much trouble? I have been watching you. Since you joined the church and began to 'walk square,' and seem to love everybody, you have had twice as many trials and accidents as you had before. I thought that when a man gave himself to God, his troubles were over. Isn't that what the parsons tell us?"

With a thoughtful but glowing face, the blacksmith said, "Do you see this piece of iron? It is for the springs of a carriage. I have been 'tempering' it for some time. To do this I heat it red hot, and then plunge it into a tub of ice cold water. This I do many times. If I find it taking 'temper,' I heat and hammer it unmercifully. In getting the right piece of iron, I found several that were too brittle. So I threw them in the scrap pile. Those scraps are worth about a cent a pound; this carriage spring is very valuable."

He paused, and his listener nodded. The blacksmith continued:

"God saves us for something more than to have a good time - that's the way I see it. We have the good time all right, for God's smile means heaven. But He wants us for service, just as I want this piece of iron. And He has put the 'temper' of Christ in us by testing us with trial. Ever since I saw this, I have been saying to Him, 'Test me in any way Thou doth choose, Lord; only don't throw me in the scrap pile.' "

"The LORD of hosts... shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver" (Mal. 3:1, 3).

True Discipleship

The Lord asks His disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" And they answer, "John the Baptist; but some, Elias; and others, One of the prophets"-different opinions but no faith. Then He asks them, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter answers, "Thou art the Christ"; and the Lord forbids the disciples to tell it to any man, in the most positive manner. This is the clearest proof that the testimony in the midst of the people (Israel) was entirely at an end. He was nevertheless the Christ, but He was rejected by the people, which showed itself to be its own enemy in rejecting the wondrous grace of God. Now He begins to teach His disciples openly that He must suffer as Son of man -a much greater position and title, both as regards the extent of His power, and the greatness of the dominion which belonged to Him; for all things will be subjected to the sway of the Son of man. But in order that the Son of man might take His place in glory, He must first suffer, be put to death and rise again; it was necessary that redemption should be accomplished, and that man should enter into a new position, into an entirely new state, in which he had never been even when innocent. Christ's position as Messiah was now set aside for this time, and He enters into one greater where old things are left behind beyond death, and all that is founded upon Christ's work, upon His death, enters upon a state altogether new and eternal.

Here the subject is treated more with regard to His sufferings; He puts the cross before the disciples, but He always speaks of death and resurrection. "And He spake that saying openly." This was a stumbling stone for Peter who did not wish that his Master should be despised in the eyes of the crowd; but the cross is the portion of those who wish to follow the Savior. Peter in saying this placed a stumbling block on the disciples' path; the Lord thinks of this, and, turning about, and looking upon His disciples, He reproves Peter, who had confessed Him but a moment ago, by the grace of God, and says to him, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." We have here an important lesson, indeed, more than one lesson. First, the Christian needs to understand well that the way of salvation, the way which leads to glory and to heaven, the way in which Christ Himself walked, and in which He wishes us to follow Him, is a way in which we must deny ourselves, suffer, and conquer. Second, let us learn that a Christian can have true faith, and be taught of God, as in Peter's case here, without having the flesh in him judged so as to render him capable of walking in the way into which this truth brings him. It is important to remember this; sincerity may exist without knowing oneself. The new position of Christ, that of Son of man, which embraced the heavenly glory of man in Him, and the supremacy over everything, rendered the cross absolutely necessary. But Peter's heart was not ready for the cross; when the Lord announces its practical effect, he cannot bear it.

How many hearts there are in this state! Sincere, no doubt; but they have not the spiritual courage to accept the consequences of the truth they believe. See the difference in Paul, made strong by the presence of the Holy Ghost and by faith. He says in the presence of death, "To know Him [Christ] and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship [communion] of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." Phil. 3:10. But there was in him the power of the Holy Ghost, and he bore always in his body the death of Jesus in order that the life of Jesus should manifest itself in his

body. Happy man! always willing to suffer everything rather than not follow fully the Lord Jesus, and to confess His name, whatever the consequence might be; and, having walked faithfully, by grace to obtain at last the prize of his heavenly calling.

But the Lord does not conceal the consequence, nor does He wish to do so. He warns the crowd, and He warns us also that if we wish to be with Him, if we wish to follow Him, we must deny ourselves and take up our cross. Let us receive the Lord's words; if we wish to be with Him forever, we must follow Him; and if we follow Him, we shall find upon the road that which He found. Of course it is not a question of expiatory sufferings, of that which He suffered from God's hand for sin, but of His sufferings from man, the contradiction of sinners, the opposition of men, abuse, and even death. We know but little what it is to suffer for the name of Jesus; but remember Christians, that which the Lord says first, "Let him deny himself"; you can always do this by grace. It is by doing this that we learn to suffer with Him, if God should call us to it. And what shall we give in exchange for our soul? This leads us to a third lesson, which requires a little more development.

That which nourishes the flesh and self-love is the great system which is called the world. Man wishes to be something in his own eyes; he would like to forget God, and make himself happy, if possible, without Him. Thus Cain, when he was driven out of God's presence after Abel's death, went away from before His face, judged in such a manner by God, that he could not hope to be admitted again into His presence to enjoy communion with Him; for God had made him to be a vagabond and a wanderer on the earth (a striking type of the Jews at this time, after having put to death the Lord Jesus, who had become, so to speak, their brother). But Cain was not willing to remain a poor vagabond; at all events he did not wish to leave his family in such a state; he wished it to escape his own proper lot; and to this end he built a city in the land of Nod ("Nod" is the Hebrew word translated "vagabond" in the first instance); he desired that his family should be established in the country where God had made him a vagabond. He names the city after his son, as do the great people of this world. There is to be found the father (that is, the inventor) of music, the father of them that work in brass and iron; there the riches of this present age were heaped together, much cattle. This is the world!

Man's heart, alienated from God, tries to make the earth, where he was set at a distance from God, as pleasing to himself as possible; and, in order to accomplish this, he uses God's gifts and creatures to be able to do without Him. It is said that there is no harm in these things; this is true, but this is not the question. They are good as being created things. It is said (as a figure) that there will be music in heaven also; but in heaven it will not be employed in order to divert the mind without God. It is a question of the use we make of these things. For instance, there is no harm in strength, but in the manner of employing it; with it one does harm to one's neighbor. Is it not true that the world which knows not God uses all kinds of pleasures to enjoy itself without Him? The heart which has not God in it endeavors to amuse itself, and for this it employs all the things which are seen, heard, and invented; as, for instance, the theater, music, and every kind of thing, because it is empty and sad and cannot satisfy itself; and after a few years, during which it has kept up its natural spirits, it finds itself tired and weary, even of trying everything, and says with Solomon, after having essayed all, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." God is neglected, and the soul lost.

For the Christian too, amusements only lead him away to a distance from God, and destroy his communion with Him. All that is in the world. the lust of the flesh. the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but of the world. The world and its lust pass away, but he that does the will of God abides forever. The prince of this world is Satan, who seduced Eve with these things, having first of all destroyed her confidence in God; and it was with these things that he tried to seduce the Lord also, although, thank. God, in vain. But with little trouble he succeeds but too often to seduce the hearts of men and of Christians, and to cause the pleasures of the world to have more power upon the soul than Christ Himself, than the love of a dying Savior.

It was thus with poor Peter! It is true, he had not yet received the Holy Ghost, but this does not change the nature of his desires. He wished for this world's glory, and that under the appearance of love for the Lord. Notice here too the Lord's love for His disciples, and how great is His tender care for them; He turns round and sees h o w great a stumbling block Peter's words may be for the other disciples, and reproveth him as severely as his words deserved. Then the Lord puts two principles before the disciples: first, the soul is worth more than everything, it is not to be exchanged for anything; second, the Lord is about to come in glory, and whosoever shall be ashamed of Him in this corrupt world where He is rejected, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when He shall come in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

Valuable Lessons From a Famine: David

2 Sam. 21

Whatever may be the grace and faithfulness of God, for the very same reason God is jealous of His Word, and deals righteously wherever His name is pledged. We are all familiar with the fact that in the days of Joshua the Gibeonites had deceived the heads of Israel. They had palmed themselves off on Joshua as coming from a far country, having for their own ends hidden the truth that they belonged to the accursed races of Canaan. The result was that Joshua and the other leaders of Israel committed the name of Jehovah, through the deceit of the Gibeonites, to sparing their lives, though in consequence of that deceit they were reduced to the condition of hewers of wood and drawers of water for the sanctuary. But Saul in his spurious zeal for God lost sight of what was so solemnly assured to the Gibeonites. Are you surprised that the king who would have taken away the life of his own son because of his rash oath, which Jonathan knew not, should feel lightly the oath that had been sworn by Joshua and the other leaders of Israel in the olden time? Wonder not; for the flesh, which here overstrains, there breaks down altogether.

It was no doubt long ago, and there are those who would ignore what is past for present ease. But time makes no difference, any more than place, in the things of God. What He looks to is His name, and by this are we also bound to keep His Word and not deny His name. Saul forgot it. Can we not easily understand this? In him was no living faith whatever. There was only form, and this will sell the Lord, when it suits, for the price of a slave, though it may at the same time make the greatest show of devotedness. Doubtless Saul could vaunt his own superior zeal for the Lord in this—that he at least was not going to be carried away by a mere name, and an obligation so long ago as to be obsolete. If the Gibeonites were Canaanites, woe be to them from King Saul!

And so it was that there was a famine, not immediately after, but now in the days of David, for three years. Two things particularly may well arrest attention in this as a great moral truth. It was a long time since the name of Jehovah was pledged; but does God ever forget? Second, it was by no means a short time since Saul had done the bloody deed, and yet no chastening had come from Jehovah. The chastening did not follow till a considerable time after. Such patience tests souls thoroughly. The chastening fell not in the days of Saul, but in those of David. Why? Because God will have all to inquire of Him; He will exercise His people in their common and continuous responsibility; He will make us feel and judge our forgetfulness of heart, our lack of looking to Himself. The evil might have been dealt with personally on Saul; but the patience of God on the one hand, and the solidarity of the people on the other, was more impressively taught when the blow fell in the days of David. People and king were thus forced to review what had been soon forgotten because taken too lightly when done. He at least is occupied with our ways, and the discipline may tarry a long time. He would have His people learn the reason why His hand was upon them.

If they confide in His righteousness, they will learn why it was the fitting time, and according to the wisdom of God, that the chastening should fall in the days of David rather than in those of Saul. If it

had fallen in the days of Saul, the Lord had not been so inquired of. Here was one that felt for the honor of Jehovah. The blow came. If David had felt the sin, if the people had confessed it, if Jehovah's name had been cleared about it, the famine might not have befallen them as it actually did. The evil was done by another who was personally guilty. It is granted that neither David nor they were responsible for his acts, but they were responsible to feel and confess the wrong. It was done publicly by King Saul in Israel. Had they mourned the deed as tarnishing Jehovah's glory? There is no appearance that there was any such confession; and the Lord will now compel them to take up that sin most seriously under the pressure of a famine, repeated till He was glorified in the matter where the wrong was done. In fact the king was guilty, but had the people shown godly horror at his profanation of Jehovah's name? They were careless about it, one cannot doubt; and David wakes up now in answer to the call; and he, chastened of God, does truly feel it, as all Israel had at any rate to smart under the consequences.

So then the famine comes, and David inquires of Jehovah. It is very evident that it required a heavy and prolonged dealing from God to make them feel it; for it is said, "There was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year." It is not that God takes pleasure in inflicting a sore plague on His people, but anything is good that leads us to draw near to God in self-judgment for a dishonor done to His name. It seems plain then that this scourge was required year after year to arouse the conscience of Israel, possibly even of David also. At length he inquires of Jehovah, who distinctly answers, "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites."

What a solemn lesson that God will not only not suffer unrighteousness to be done to the people that He loves, but even to the enemies that deceived them! "The righteous Jehovah loveth righteousness." It would be hard to see or ask a more patent proof of the delicacy and also the tenacity of God's holding to righteousness than His dealing in this very case with Israel for the oath passed to the Gibeonites. Everyone can understand how He must have felt about Israel or about David; but that God should be jealous for a wrong done under such circumstances and so long ago, to the Gibeonites, is to my mind a most wholesome lesson of the God with whom we have to do.

Nor this only. "And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them,... What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of Jehovah?" This is another important point: their consciences must be satisfied, their hearts consoled and at rest for the wrong that had been done to them. Yet there is no disguise as to the people in question. Now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel. The Spirit of God expressly calls our attention to their origin and race. They were "of the remnant of the Amorites" - and you know what the Amorites were - "and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah." An excellent thing, is it not?-zeal for the people of God. But zeal only for God's people, or nominally for God Himself, can never sanctify disrespect to His name, even if through trickery only that name had been pledged to His worst enemies. For in truth it was not a question of those to whom the name was pledged, but of His name that was sworn thus. If Jehovah's name was given as a shield to any, Jehovah would be the unswerving and most righteous guardian of its sanctity.

Then of the Gibeonites when they come, David asks, "What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of Jehovah? And the Gibeonites said to

him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you. And they answered the king, "The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel, let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto Jehovah in Gibeah of Saul, whom Jehovah did choose. And the king said, I will give them. But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of Jehovah's oath that was between them." We must carefully look to this, and we shall always find God with us in it. Never should we sacrifice one duty in doing another. However important it may be, for instance, to pay God homage outside, we must never let slip God's honor at home in the family. It is a blessed thing to serve Him abroad, but there will be a sorry maintenance of His glory outside the house if He is not honored within. And if we find therefore the Gibeonite's oath from Jehovah on one side, there was no less the oath to Jonathan, Saul's son, and his seed on the other. No doubt a hasty spirit would have sacrificed the one for the other; the wisdom of God enables us to maintain both. This is fairly seen in the conduct of David.

And further, the very execution of divine judgment introduces the deeply pathetic story of Saul's concubine: "And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night. And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done." This was not a slight thing to David. No doubt God's name demanded vindication, and it was right. It was due to the Gibeonites that they should be satisfied. God was compelling them to judge the case that the guilt might be expiated; but it was more than right-it was beautiful and suitable - that Rizpah should thus spread the deep sorrow of her heart before God.

At this juncture David shows too on his part what was lovely and becoming in the king of Israel. Far was he from insulting the memory of the late king, for the very one that had given up his sons to die went and took the bones of Saul; this was the very time that he took them, showing the last honor to the departed king of Israel and his family. "And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen them from the street of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa: and he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged. And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulcher of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God was entreated for the land."

Waiting and Watching

To wait and watch for Him is what we are called to do. The two words do not carry quite the same thought, and I cannot better explain the difference than by giving an illustration which suggested itself to me when speaking to a company of fishermen. The fleet had all gone to the fishing ground, when a furious and long-continued westerly hurricane burst on them. Rapidly getting in their nets, they had to flee before it. Each day it lasted, took them farther and farther from home, where great anxiety prevailed as to their safety. At length the gale spent itself, the wind veered to the southeast, and the boats made for home.

On their way they managed to get a telegram flung ashore and transmitted: "All safe. Coming home." The good news spread like wildfire through the village, bringing joy to many a troubled bosom. They came at a good Dace, having a fair wind and a flowing tide. The old skipper of the leading craft had a telescope, and as he came within sight of the pier head, he used it. After a good long look he said to his crew, "The whole village is out on the pier watching for us."

As the smack drew rapidly near, the telescope was used again; and this time the skipper was heard to say, half under his breath, "God bless her! the dear old soul," while a tear rolled down his weather-beaten cheek.

"Who do you see?" asked Jim, the mate, who had charge of the tiller. "I see my wife standing at the very pier head, watching for me," and another tear or two fell on the deck.

"Do you see my wife too?" "No, Jim, I cannot see her; maybe she's there, but she's not visible."

By this time the staunch lugsail boat had neared the harbor, and loving salutations had passed between the old couple.

No special greeting had awaited Jim, who, rather dejected, trudged up to the back of the village where lay his home. Peeping in at the window, he saw his wife sitting at the fire, deep in a book. Jim opened the door. She heard the latch, and looking up said, "O Jim, my dear, I'm glad to see you back; I was waiting for you."

"Very likely, but the skipper's wife was watching for him at the pier head."

God give you and me to be true watchers for the return of His Son.

"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." Luke 12:37, 38.

The Present Effect of Waiting for Christ

There are two things which constitute the joy of a Christian, which are his strength on the road, and the object constantly before his heart. First, present communion and fellowship with God the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Second, the hope of the coming of the Lord. And these two cannot be separated without loss to our souls, for we cannot have all the profit without both of these.

If we are not looking for the coming of the Lord, there is nothing that can separate us, in the same way, from this present evil world; neither will Christ Himself be so much the object before the soul; nor yet shall we be able in the same measure to apprehend the mind and counsels of God about the world, if there be not this waiting for His Son from heaven.

Again, if this hope be looked at apart from present communion and fellowship with God, we shall not have present power, the heart being enfeebled by the mind being too much occupied and overborne by the evil around. For we cannot be really looking for God's Son from heaven, without at the same time seeing the world's utter rejection of Him, seeing that the world itself is going wrong, its wise men having no wisdom-all is going on to judgment, the principles of evil are loosening all bands. The soul thus becomes oppressed, and the heart sad; but if, through grace, the Christian is in present communion and fellowship with God, his soul stands steady, and is calm and happy before God, because there is a fund of blessing in Him which no circumstances can ever touch or change. The evil tidings are heard, the sorrow is seen, but the Christian's heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord; and this carries him far above every circumstance.

Brethren, we all need this; for to walk steadily with God we need both this fellowship and this hope. I do not believe a Christian can have his heart scripturally right, unless he is looking for God's Son from heaven; for there could be no such thing as attempting to set the world right, if its sin in rejecting Christ were fully seen. Moreover, there never will be a correct judgment formed of the character of the world until that crowning sin be apprehended by the soul. To a Christian who is looking and waiting for Christ to come from heaven, Christ Himself is unspeakably more the object before the soul. It is not that I shall get to heaven and be happy, but that the Lord Himself is coming from heaven for me, and for all the Church. It is this which gives its character to the joy of the saint; so Christ Himself says, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). Where I find my delight, there shall you find yours also, I with you, and you with Me - forever with the Lord.

You may think to find good or produce good in man, but you will never find waiting for Christ in man. In the world the first Adam may be cultivated, but it is the first Adam still; the last Adam will never be found there, being rejected by the world. And it is the looking for this rejected Lord which stamps the whole character and walk of the saints.

Then again there is another thing connected with my waiting for God's Son from heaven. I have not yet got the Person I love with me, and while waiting for Him I am going through the world tired

and worn with the spirit and character of everything around me. The more I am in communion with God, the more keenly shall I feel the spirit of the world to be a weariness to me, although God still upholds my soul in fellowship and communion with Himself. Therefore, Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 1, "to you who are troubled rest with us" (v. 7). I get rest to my spirit now in waiting for Christ, knowing that when He comes He will have everything His own way; for the coming of the Lord, which will be trouble to the world, will be to the saints full and everlasting rest. Still it is not that we are to be "weary and faint in our minds"; it is not right to be weary of the service and conflict. Oh, no! Rather let me be victorious every day, but still it is not rest to be fighting. However, when walking with God, it is not so much thinking of combat, as joying in God Himself. I shall know it all better when I am in the glory; my soul will be enlarged, and more capable of enjoying what God really is; but it is the same kind of joy that I have now, as I shall have when He comes to be glorified in His saints, only greater in degree.

And if this joy in God is now in my soul in power, it hides the world from me altogether, and becomes a spring of love to those in the world; for though I may be tired of the combat, still I feel that there are people in the world that need the love which I enjoy, and desire that they should possess (it is the joy of what God is for me that sustains me and carries me on through all the conflict), so that our souls will be exercised in both the fellowship and the hope. Thus if I look for Christ's coming apart from this fellowship and communion with God, I shall be oppressed, and shall not go on steadily and properly. When the love of God fills my heart, it flows out toward all those that have need of it, toward saints and sinners according to their need; for if I feel the exercise of the power of this love in my heart, I shall be going out to serve others; as it is the power of this love that enables me to go through the toil and labor of service, from that attachment to Christ which leads to service, although through suffering for His sake. If my soul is wrapped up in the last Adam, attachment to Christ puts its right stamp upon all that is of the first Adam.

When this love has led out into active service, then the conflict, doubtless, will be found. In 2 Corinthians 1 there is present blessing in the midst of trial; but, in 2 Thessalonians 1, it is tribulation and not rest out of it till the Lord come - "That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." In 2 Cor. 1:3, 4 there is present blessing in the midst of the trial - "who comforteth us in all our tribulation" - so that if the sufferings for Christ's sake be ours, there is at the same time, the comforting of God in the soul. How rich a spring of blessing is this in return for this poor little trouble of mine! I get God pouring into my soul the revelation of Himself. I get God communicating Himself to my soul, for it is really that. I find it to be a present thing; it comes home to me, to my heart, this very joy of God-God delighting in me, and I in God. He identifies Himself with those who suffer for Him.

If, therefore, the expectation of Christ and His constraining love lead us out into service, in the desire that others may share our blessing, and thereby bring us into trials or persecutions, how rich and sustaining are the consolations ministered to our hearts. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." 2 Cor. 1:5. May the Lord ever fill our souls with the sense of His own presence, and keep our hearts under the present power of waiting for His coming.

The Way to the Kingdom: the Path of Suffering

"If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." Rom. 8:17.

Our way to the kingdom lies through suffering, affliction, and tribulation; but, thank God, we can by faith say, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." And further, we know that "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Finally, "We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." It is a high honor and a real privilege to be allowed to drink of our blessed Master's cup, and to be baptized with His baptism - to travel in blest companionship with Him along the road which leads directly to the glorious inheritance. The Heir and the joint-heirs reach that inheritance by the pathway of suffering.

But let it be remembered that the suffering of which the joint-heirs participate has no penal element in it. It is not suffering from the hand of infinite justice, because of sin; all that was fully met on the cross, when the divine Victim bowed His sacred head beneath the stroke. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins," and that "once" was on the tree, and nowhere else. He never suffered for sins before, and He never can suffer for sins again. "Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." "Christ was once offered."

There are two ways in which to view a suffering Christ - first, as bruised of Jehovah; second, as rejected of men. In the former He stood alone; in the latter, we have the honor of being associated with Him. In the former, I say, He stood alone; for who could have stood with Him? He bore the wrath of God alone; He traveled in solitude down into a "rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown," and there He settled forever the question of our sins. With this we had nothing to do, though to this we are eternally indebted for everything. He fought the fight and gained the victory alone, but He divides the spoils with us. He was in solitude in the "horrible pit" and "miry clay"; but directly He planted His foot on the everlasting "rock" of resurrection, He associates us with Him. He uttered the cry alone; He sings the "new song" in company. (P s a. 40:2, 3.)

Now the question is, Shall we refuse to suffer from the hand of man with Him who suffered from the hand of God for us? That it is, in a certain sense, a question, is evident from the Spirit's constant use of the word "if" in connection with it. "If so be that we suffer with Him." "If we suffer, we shall also reign." There is no such question as to sonship. We do not reach the high dignity of sons through suffering, but through the quickening power of the Holy Ghost, founded on the accomplished work of Christ, according to God's eternal counsel. This can never be touched. We do not reach the family through suffering. The Apostle does not say, That ye may be counted worthy of the family of God for which ye also suffer. They were in the family already; but they were bound for the kingdom, and their road to that kingdom lay through suffering; and not only so, but the measure of suffering for the kingdom would be according to their devotedness and conformity to the King. The more like we are to Him, the more we shall suffer with Him; and the deeper our

fellowship with Him in the suffering, the deeper will be our fellowship in the glory. There is a difference between the house of the Father and the kingdom of the Son; in the former, it will be a question of capacity; in the latter, a question of assigned position. All my children may be around my table, but their enjoyment of my company and conversation will entirely depend on their capacity. One may be seated on my knee, in the full enjoyment of his relationship as a child, yet perfectly unable to comprehend a word I say; another may exhibit uncommon intelligence in conversation, yet not be a whit happier in his relationship than the infant on my knee. But when it becomes a question of service for me, or public identification with me it is evidently quite another thing. This is but a feeble illustration of the idea of capacity in the Father's house, and assigned position in the kingdom of the Son.

But let it be remembered that our suffering with Christ is not a yoke of bondage, but a matter of privilege; not an iron rule, but a gracious gift; not constrained servitude, but voluntary devotedness.

"Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Phil. 1:29. Moreover, there can be little doubt but that the real secret of suffering for Christ is to have the heart's affections centered in Him. The more I love Jesus, the closer I shall walk with Him; and the closer I walk with Him, the more faithfully I shall imitate Him; and the more faithfully I imitate Him, the more I shall suffer with Him. Thus it all flows from love to Christ; and then it is a fundamental truth that "we love Him because He first loved us." In this, as in everything else, let us beware of a legal spirit; for it must not be imagined that a man with the yoke of legality around his neck is suffering for Christ; alas! it is much to be feared that such a one does not know Christ, does not know the blessedness of sonship, has not yet been established in grace, is rather seeking to reach the family by works of law than to reach the kingdom by the path of suffering.

On the other hand, let us see that we are not shrinking from our Master's cup and baptism. Let us not profess to enjoy the benefits which His cross secures, while we refuse the rejection which that cross involves. We may rest assured that the road to the kingdom is not enlightened by the sunshine of this world's favor, nor strewn with the roses of its prosperity. If a Christian is advancing in the world, he has much reason to apprehend that he is not walking in company with Christ. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be" (John 12:26). What was the goal of Christ's earthly career? Was it an elevated, influential position in this world? By no means. What then? He found His place on the cross, between two condemned malefactors. But, it will be said, God was in this. True; yet man was in it likewise; and this latter truth is what must inevitably secure our rejection by the world, if only we keep in company with Christ. The companionship of Christ, which lets me into heaven, casts me out of earth; and to talk of the former, while I am ignorant of the latter, proves there is something wrong. If Christ were on earth now, what would His path be? Whither would it end? where would it terminate? Would we like to walk with Him? Let us answer those inquiries under the edge of the Word, and under the eye of the Almighty; and may the Holy Ghost make us faithful to an absent, a rejected, a crucified Master. The man who walks in the Spirit will be filled with Christ; and, being filled with Him, he will not be occupied with suffering, but with Him for whom he suffers. If the eye is fixed on Christ, the suffering will be as nothing in comparison with the present joy and future glory.

We Shall See Him As He Is

1 John 3:2

This especial favor is reserved for a unique company. Christians only are to have this sight of their Lord; therefore the great importance of the last word. It is not what He was on earth, nor is it here what He will be. What He was, the Apostle (who had seen Him as the perfect Man on earth) speaks of in chapter 1. On earth he had seen Him "that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us"; and what He will be, John tells us in the book of Revelation (chap. 1:7; 19:1116). But in this passage, the Apostle says it is what He is now that we shall see.

And what is He now? He has entered into that glory which He had with the Father before the world was, as the ever-obedient Son, obedient even unto death; and in John 17 the Lord prays respecting us, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me"-that glory which He has now-the glory which He had before the world was. That wondrous relationship too of the Son with the Father, into which He has entered, He has entered as Man, as the One who glorified God on the earth. We are to witness what that glory and that relationship are. Infinite grace that brings us in on the ground of His own work, that work for God's glory, and for our eternal blessing! Blessed Lord, we shall see Thee in Thine own glory, and in Thine own enjoyment of all the affections of Thy Father's heart! Into that full joy the Lord entered after His work on the cross. His hour of sorrow (John 12:27) all ended with that work; and the hour of His glory began, as He said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." If we seek the answer to the question, What is He now? the Holy Ghost, descended from Him when glorified, gives the answer through the Apostle Peter. "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus" (Acts 3:13). It is the answer to His prayer in John 17: "With the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." And we are to be there to see Him in it.

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

But not only are we in the same relationship, but we are to be in the same place, in order to behold His glory; we are to be with Him in it. It is this unique favor that John, I believe, speaks of in the verse quoted at the head of this article; because only in the same place as He Himself is, can 1

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

John looked forward with joy to that time when he, in the company of all the members of the body, should "see Him as He is." We and he are still awaiting it. We shall be admitted into the "Father's house" to see what that sphere has been, glory and affection displayed toward him, before we are brought out to share with Him in all the glory of the kingdom. The heart of the Father has been for nineteen centuries delighting in Him, in Him who was ever His delight, even before the foundation of the world, as Proverbs 8 says. But what saint has fully entered into what that delight, that joy of the Father, in Him has been? Well, we shall see it in that day; for "We shall see Him as He is."

We are going into the Father's house, as John 14:1-3 says; but the first thought is that we shall "see Him as He is" there. We are to have, so to speak, this private time with Him in His own abode, before the whole universe, heaven and earth, participate in the joy of themselves giving to Him His chief place over them all. But the precious thing is the intimacy of the house. Who will picture the joy of that hour, the joy of the Father's house? It is more than the joy of Luke 15; for this, His eternal Son, never went astray. It is this beloved Son that we shall see as He is. We shall be like Him when He

appears, but we shall first have seen Him as He is. "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

H. C. A.

The Well-Watered Plains

Satan tempts the saints to imitate Lot when they ought to imitate Abraham - to have earthly affections in place of heavenly affections.

People say, What harm is there in the well-watered plains of Jordan? Are not they also a gift of Providence? I answer, The devil planted Sodom in their midst.

What is done in the flesh is not to the glory of God; it may, thanks to His powerful intervention, turn in the end to His glory; but so far as concerns us it is worth absolutely nothing.

A Christian is a being purchased at a great price, and who has nothing else to do than to glorify God.

What Is That in Thine Hand?

Exod. 4:2

If God says, "What is that in thine hand?" let us examine honestly if it is something He can use for His glory or not. If not, do not let us hesitate an instant about dropping it. It may be something we do not like to part with; but the Lord is able to give us much more than this, and the first glimpse of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord will enable us to count those things loss which were gain to us. But if it is something that He can use, He will make us do ever so much more with it than before.

Moses little thought what the Lord was going to make him do with the "rod in his hand"! Henceforth it was "the rod of God in his hand."

What Is the Camp?

Heb. 13:12, 13

In this last chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, the Spirit of God, speaking of the fact that "the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp," goes on to say, "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify [set apart] the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." vv. 11-13.

Many are at a loss to know what is referred to by the term "camp," yet it is very important to understand it, because those who love the Lord Jesus Christ are exhorted to go forth from it unto Him.

In order to learn what is meant then (as is our duty to do) by this expression, we should first of all find out to whom the epistle is primarily and especially addressed, and with God's blessing it will soon be made plain.

The epistle to the Hebrews was written to professedly converted Jews who had been born and trained up under the law given by God to Israel at Mount Sinai when in camp in the wilderness. Then and there a system of worship was ordained of God for this nation in the flesh, which was perfect in its place, but which did not suppose or require that the worshipers should be born again, and under which system they as a nation utterly failed.

Next we must get clear as to what the Spirit of God called "the camp," at the time the Apostle wrote the above exhortation. The ninth chapter tells us that there were ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary, consisting of a tabernacle made with men's hands, and pitched on earth, which was their place of worship. They also had an ordained priesthood-men of a certain family set apart to come between the worshipers and God, of whom Aaron was the high priest. And this man was the minister of this sanctuary, without whom the worshipers could not worship..

This high priest offered up an atonement for these people's sins once every year, besides the other sacrifices that were offered up continually; and as already noticed, these worshipers were not required to be a converted people (though some of them were so), but were a company of believers and unbelievers mingled together, all of them on the ground of law-keeping for righteousness.

Now this system embraced as worshipers all the nation of Israel then in camp. At the time the Apostle wrote, this nation had become settled in the land, and their worship centered in the temple at Jerusalem. The Spirit of God calls this "the camp," out of which the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," were to go forth.

I learn then that Judaism, or this system of worship in the flesh, was in Paul's day "the camp." And, dear Christian reader, is it not clear at a glance that any system of worship of a Jewish nature and character, and in consequence a system that the flesh and sight-the world in fact-can more or less

join in, is the camp in our day? We know, as revealed by the Son of God Himself, that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"-a thing impossible for the flesh to do. It requires men to be born of the Spirit and sealed with the Spirit. In John 4:21 our Lord says, "Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." The time had come when places of worship on earth-mountains, and temples made with hands-should be done away with. Men in the flesh had been thoroughly tested and proved to be utterly incapable of obeying God's law, or worshiping Him either; and now a new order of things comes in: men born of the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, worshiping in spirit and in truth, not in a temple or tabernacle on earth, but in the holiest, that is, heaven itself- the only worshiping place now-having boldness to enter there by the blood of Jesus.

Therefore, if any system of worship exists now which has a worldly sanctuary-a temple made with hands, with an ordained priesthood or class of men set apart to take a special place between the worshipers and God, without whom they cannot worship, where the worshipers are a mixture of converted and unconverted people under law, that is, must be indeed-"the camp." It is Judaism in its nature and character as a system of worship, though there may be some real Christians in it, and the gospel be still preached more or less faithfully by some in it, too.

It is the Holy Spirit-it is God-speaking, who says through the Apostle to any of His dear children who are in any kind of system such as this, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him [Christ] without the camp, bearing His reproach."

"But," say some, "why not stay inside and do the good you can where you are?" Because, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Sam. 15:22. Because God will not have Christianity and Judaism mixed up together-the new wine in the old bottles. Because God will not have the world and the Church unequally yoked together (2 Cor. 6). Because Jesus Christ has come a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands. He has been cast out by worshipers in the flesh (Jewish worshipers), and suffered outside the gate on Calvary, proving that worship in the flesh is not a real thing; for if they had loved God, they would have revered His Son. Though these worshipers in the flesh could point out in the Scriptures where Christ was to be born, to the wise men of the east, not one foot did they go to find Him, but were troubled and distressed at the very thought of His being come.

Now, risen from the dead, He has entered into the holy place made without hands, even into heaven itself, not with the blood of bulls and goats, "but by His own blood," "having obtained [not redemption for a year only, but] eternal redemption for us." Heb. 9:12. So now the Man in the glory, the God-man, is our minister-"A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." (Heb. 8:1, 2; 9:11, 12, 24.)

What Wait I for? Psalm 39:7

Psalm 39:7

This is a searching question for the heart; but it is oftentimes a most salutary one, inasmuch as we may constantly detect ourselves in an attitude of waiting for things which, when they come, prove not to be worth waiting for.

The human heart is very much like the poor lame man at the gate of the temple, in Acts 3. He was looking at every passerby, "expecting to receive something"; and the heart will ever be looking for some relief, some comfort, or some enjoyment in passing circumstances. It may ever and anon be found sitting by the side of some creature stream, vainly expecting that some refreshment will flow along its channel.

It is amazing to think of the trifles on which nature will, at times, fix its expectant gaze - a change of circumstances - change of scene - change of air - a journey - a visit - a letter - a book - anything, in short, is sufficient to raise expectations in a poor heart which is not finding its center, its spring, its all, in Christ.

Hence the practical importance of frequently searching our hearts with the question, "What wait I for?" Doubtless, the true answer to this inquiry would, at times, furnish the most advanced Christian with matter for deep humiliation and self-judgment before the Lord.

In the 6th verse of the 39th Psalm, we have three types of character, as set forth in the vain show, vain disquietude, and heaping up. These types may sometimes be found combined, but very often they have a distinct development.

There are many whose whole life is one vain show, whether in their personal character, their commercial position, or their political or religious profession. There is nothing solid about them - nothing real - nothing true. The glitter is the most shallow gilding possible. There is nothing deep, nothing intrinsic. All is surface work - all the merest flash and smoke.

Then, we find another class, whose life is one continued scene of vain disquietude. You will never find them at ease - never satisfied - never happy. There is always some terrible thing coming - some catastrophe in the distance, the bare anticipation of which keeps them in a constant fever of anxiety. They are troubled about property, about friends, about business, and about children. Though placed in circumstances which thousands of their fellow creatures would deem most enviable, they seem to be in a perpetual fret. They harass themselves in reference to troubles that may never come, difficulties they may never encounter, sorrows they may never live to see. Instead of remembering the blessings of the past, and rejoicing in the mercies of the present, they are anticipating the trials and sorrows of the future. In a word, "they are disquieted in vain."

Finally, you will meet another class, quite different from either of the preceding - keen, shrewd, industrious, money-making people - people who would live where others would starve. There is not much vain show about them. They are too solid, and life is too practical a reality for anything of

that sort. Neither can you say there is much disquietude about them. Theirs is an easygoing, quiet, plodding spirit, or an active, enterprising, speculating turn of mind. "He heapeth up riches and knoweth not who shall gather them."

But, reader, remember, on all three alike the Spirit has stamped, "VANITY." Yes, "all," without any exception, "under the sun," has been pronounced by one who knew it by experience, and wrote it by inspiration, "vanity and vexation of spirit." Turn where you will, "under the sun," and you will find nothing on which the heart can rest. You must rise on the steady and vigorous pinion of faith to regions above the sun, in order to find "a better and an enduring substance." The One who sits at the right hand of God has said, "I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: that I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." Pro. 8:20, 21. None but Christ can give "substance" - none but He can "fill" - none but He can "satisfy." There is that in Christ's perfect work which meets the deepest need of conscience; and there is that in His glorious Person which can satisfy the most earnest longings of the heart. The one who has found Christ on the cross, and Christ on the throne, has found all he can possibly need for time or eternity.

Well, therefore, might the psalmist, having challenged his heart with the question, "What wait I for?" reply, "My hope is in Thee." No vain show, no vain disquietude, no heaping up for him. He had found an object in God worth waiting for; and, therefore, turning away His eye from all beside, He says, "My hope is in Thee."

This, my beloved reader, is the only true, peaceful, and happy position. The soul that leans on, looks to, and waits for the Lord Jesus, will never be disappointed. Such a one possesses an exhaustless fund of present enjoyment in fellowship with Christ; while, at the same time, he is cheered by "that blessed hope" that when this present scene, with all its vain show, its vain disquietude, and its vain resources have passed away, he shall be with Christ where He is, to behold His glory, to bask in the light of His countenance, and to be conformed to His image forever.

May we, then, be much in the habit of challenging our earth-bound, creature-seeking hearts with the searching inquiry, "What wait I for?" Am I waiting for some change of circumstances, or "for His Son from heaven"? Can I look up to the Lord Jesus and, with a full and honest heart, say, "Lord,... my hope is in Thee"?

May our hearts be more thoroughly separated from this present evil world and all that pertains thereto, by the power of communion with those things that are unseen and eternal.

"From various cares our hearts retire,

Though deep and boundless their desire,

We've now to please but One;

Him before whom each knee shall bow-

With Him is all our business now,

And those that are His own.

"With these our happy lot is cast,
Through the world's deserts rude and waste,
Or through its gardens fair;
Whether the storms of trouble sweep,
Or all in dead supineness sleep,
T'advance be all our care."

Where Does Your Compass Point? a Pointed Question

All is utter vanity here beneath the sun. Solomon, the wisest of men, with more wisdom than all others have possessed, learned it long ago (Ecclesiastes); but men are very slow to believe him in our day. What can be clearer than that to live without Christ, and to die in our sins (John 8:24) is loss for eternity. And to live for self, or with selfish motives and objects, when we are His (1 Cor. 6:19, 20), is just a wasted life.

Christianity, in one word, is "Christ" displacing "I" (Gal. 2:20). "I" rules in the world. "Christ" should rule in all in the Christian. "To me to live is Christ," said the Apostle (Phil. 1:21). It is not merely a question of denying self in this or that, but occupied with Christ and the things above, self is forgotten, and we become unselfish; and then all is simple and easy. Neither is it a question of giving up for Christ, but having Christ, we are infinite gainers now and forever (Phil. 3:4-15). In Him we have all, and it becomes a positive hindrance and weight to hold to things here.

A Christian that is really single-eyed, living Christ, is the most independent man in the world. Loving God, all things work together for his good (Rom. 8:28). And dependent on God alone, he becomes independent of men, He walks by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). A thousand things that the natural heart loves and craves for lose their attraction. He is already satisfied with Christ, and has no room for them. But as sure as Christ is not the one Object, all-absorbing, the heart turns to something here. Alas! have we not all to mourn more or less that this is often the case?

If the compass does not point to the north, there is something wrong, and the ship will go astray on the wild waters. And if the compass of our hearts, so to speak, does not point to Christ, depend upon it that sooner or later we shall drift with some current in the world, to our sorrow. A beloved Christian once said, "The world is not big enough for the heart of man, but Christ is too big." This witness is true. Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon are the proofs.

It is the superior attraction of the Person of Christ, rejected here and glorified above, that draws souls truly to an outside place on the earth in faithfulness to Him; and the mixed religion and ways of professing Christendom are left in the rear.

The Word Made Flesh

John 1:1-13

There is one remark that furnishes a most important key to the Gospel of John, which is illustrated very simply and manifestly in this first chapter. The object of the Holy Ghost is to assert the personal glory of Jesus; and hence it is that there is not perhaps a single chapter in the New Testament that presents our Lord in so many different aspects, yet all personal, as this opening chapter of his Gospel. His divine glory is carefully guarded. He is said in the most distinct language to be God as to His nature, but withal a man. He is God no less than the Father is, or the Holy Ghost; but He is the Word in a way in which the Father and the Holy Ghost were not. It was Jesus Christ the Son of God who alone was the Word of God. He only after a personal sort expressed God. The Father and the Holy Ghost remained in their own unseeable majesty. The Word had for His place to express God clearly; and this belonged to Him, it is evident, as a distinctive personal glory. It was not merely that He was the Word when He came into this world, but "In the beginning was the Word" when there was no creature. Before anything came into being that was made, the Word was in the beginning with God; not merely in God, as if merged or lost in God, but He had a distinct personal subsistence before a creature existed. He "was in the beginning with God." This is of immense importance, and with these truths our Gospel opens.

Then we find His creation glory stated afterward. "All things were made by Him." There is nothing which more stamps God to be God than giving existence to that which had none, causing to exist by His own will and power. Now all things exist by the Word; and so emphatically true is this that the Spirit has added, "and without Him was not anything made that was made."

But there was that which belonged to the Lord Jesus that was not made: "In Him was life." It was not only that He could cause a life to exist that had not before existed, but there was a life that belonged to Him from all eternity. "In Him was life." Not that this life began to be; all else, all creation, began to be; and it was He that gave them the commencement of their existence.

But in Him was life, a life that was not created, a life that was therefore divine in its nature. It was the reality and the manifestation of this life which were of prime importance to man. Everything else that had been since the beginning of the world was only a creature, but in Him was life. Man was destined to have the display of this life on earth. But it was in Him before He came among men. The life was not called the light of angels, but of men. Nowhere do we find that eternal life is created. The angels are never said to have life in the Son of God. They were kept by divine power and holy. Theirs is a purely creature life, whereas it is a wonderful fact of revelation that we who believe have the eternal life that was in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and are therefore said to be partakers of the divine nature. This is in no way true of an angel. It is not that we for a moment cease to be creatures, but we have what is above the creature in Christ the Son of God.

And this "light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." It is striking to remark here the entire passing over of all the history of the world of which we are apt to make so much,

yea, even of the dispensational dealings of God with men. All is passed by very briefly indeed - those ages that man thinks all but interminable, in which God gave being to the creature, and in which He may have changed over and over again the various forms of the creature, where science is endeavoring to pursue its uncertain and weary way. All this is closed up in the few words, "All things were made by Him." Scripture, and this chapter in particular, summerizes it with striking brevity. "All things were made by Him." The details of it were left completely aside. What was good for us to know, we are told in Genesis 1. There is nothing like that chapter even in cosmogonies which borrowed from it. And all that man has thought or said or written about a system of the world is not to be named with it for depth or certainty, as well as for simplicity, in the smallest compass.

But there is a reason why all such matters vanish after two or three words. It is because the Lord Jesus, the Word of God, is the Object that the Holy Ghost is dwelling on. The moment that He is brought out, creation just pays Him homage, owning Him to be the Creator, and is then forthwith dismissed. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." It is enough to say that He created all. He remains in His own grace. Now we learn what is the Spirit's object in this. It was not to give us details of the creation; it was to acquaint us with Jesus as the light of men.

In what condition then did He find men? Were there not great differences among them, as was thought? There were some, most indeed, idolaters, yet wise and prudent, worshiping stocks and stones; and others who were not idolaters, but very zealous for the law as given by Moses. Not that a word is said yet about the law, nor about any differences, but that the Word of God was the light that manifested everybody; whether Jews or Gentiles, they were only darkness. It is not therefore only that the physical creation is passed by most curtly, but the moral world is closed with almost equal brevity. "The light shineth in darkness," and whatever the boasting of the Gentiles, and the law of the Jews (which was real as compared with the Gentiles), here all is measured and put out, as it were, by the true light, the Word of God. Jew or Gentile, they were but darkness, and the light shines in darkness; and in spite of all its pretension and pride, the darkness comprehended it not. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." When the Holy Ghost is come down, things are also tested and convicted by Him; and He is brought forward by Paul somewhat as John here introduces the Son of God. It shows how poor all of man is in comparison with God, and how little he is capable of appreciating the truth in the Son or by the Spirit.

Then we find John brought in. The reason why he is singled out from all others I believe to be this: he was the immediate forerunner of the Lord Jesus. He would surely not have been named here if it were not so, because he was the moon that derived its light from the sun-from the Lord Jesus just about to come. His was only a derivative light, and he seems brought in here because of that peculiarity. Other prophets were too distant from Christ, but John was near enough to be an immediate precursor of the Messiah. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe." It is no question of law-testing or proving. All this was very important in its place, but the glory that the law had is completely eclipsed by a brighter glory. Scripture therefore takes pains to say, John "was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light." He might be "a burning and a shining lamp" (as it ought to be in chapter 5), but he was only an earthly and derived light. "He was not that Light." "That was the true light"; Jesus is the Light, the true Light, which (as rightly

rendered) on coming into the world lighteth every man. It is speaking of the effect of Christ's coming into the world. It is not every man that cometh into the world; but that, when He comes into the world, He is the One that casts His light on everyone here below. There had been a time when, as it is said in the Acts, God winked at the ignorance of men; but now everything must appear in its own light, or rather darkness, because the true Light was come; and therefore, when He comes into the world, He lights every man there; all are brought out just as they are, and none can escape. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him"; and the awful result of this darkness was that "the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

The world was guilty enough; it was so dark that it did not even know Him. The Jews had abundance of truth by which they might know Him, but their will was still more set against the Son of God than even the poor Gentiles. "His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power [title or right] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." What a blessed place! And blessed to know that this is our place to which grace has entitled us now in His name! May we seek to make Him known to every creature with all our hearts in the measure of power the Lord has given us, honoring thus, and in every other way, the Lord Jesus, whom the Holy Ghost loves to honor.

We have other glories of His brought out afterward. We hear of Him as the Son, the Lamb of God, the Baptiser with the Holy Ghost, the King of Israel, and the Son of man. All these are successively unfolded to us in this chapter. Indeed it would be difficult to say what glory of our Lord is not presented here except that of Priest and of Head of the Church. John never gives us the priesthood of Jesus. He touches what is close on it, when he speaks in his first epistle of advocacy with the Father; but the business of John was to show His divine personal glory, yet as man on earth. Priest was what He was called to be in heaven, and as Head of the Church He is there also. But John shows us what He was in Himself as coming from heaven, and that He does not lose one whit of His glory by becoming a man. In His being Priest and Head of the Church we see special glories which He received on going up to heaven; and these Paul develops fully. John's point is God and the Father manifested on earth in the Person of Jesus Christ His Son.

The World and the Love of God

At the end of 1 John 3 the Holy Spirit is mentioned as having been given to believers, and by this we know that God dwells in us. Immediately afterward we find the work of the enemy in sending forth many false prophets into the world, and the necessity of trying the spirits; forever since the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, the tactics of the enemy have been those of spiritual imposture. The world's true character comes out here, and note that it is a world into whose bosom many false prophets have been received; no one is more likely to receive a ready welcome from the world than a false prophet. Such have been popular in all times.

But a certain test is given whereby the spirits may be proved—that is, Jesus Christ come in flesh—and every spirit that would take away in the least degree anything from the divine or human glory of our Lord, is not of God. The presence of the blessed Son of God - truly incarnate, as John's gospel presents Him— is the test; and the spirit of antichrist is detected where Jesus Christ is not confessed.

This then is the character of the world in which we live. It has rejected Jesus, and has received with open arms a host of false prophets; and it will end with the acceptance of the antichrist. The age will end in the development of man's independence to such a degree, that he will exalt himself to the very highest point of pretension, and revolt against God; and, as one who has climbed recklessly to the top of a high steeple, suddenly smitten with vertigo, falls and is broken to pieces, so shall the pride of the antichrist come to an end, judged as he shall be of the Lord when once he shall have attained the bad eminence to which he is ascending.

The point is that the spirit of the antichrist is already in the world, and we have to meet it on all sides. It is the spirit which denies man's ruin, and which would exalt him to the skies.

But we have a very blessed statement as to all believers: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." The presence of the Holy Ghost in the family of God (for here the "children" takes in all Christians) is a most wonderful fact, and He is infinitely superior to the terrible and restless spirit which is in the world.

They are of the world, and speak according to its principles, and are listened to readily; the false prophets have very often a philanthropic doctrine to propound, the amelioration of the whole human race, universal brotherhood, and other very grand schemes; but all these things are of the world, that is, according to its principles.

These men will be listened to, and I recollect once seeing an immense crowd around a preacher in London, and saying to a friend, "Let us go to listen; I am perfectly certain that it is not the gospel he is preaching, for if so he would not have so large an audience." And indeed it was not the gospel, but exhortations to abstain from alcohol, and to practice civic virtues, and thus to prosper on earth, with a hope of paradise hereafter. All such teaching will be readily received, provided that man's fall and ruin, and God's claims be ignored.

The world studies political economy, in which there is not one thought of God or of His Christ, but how to make the best use of the resources of this planet without Him.

The world listens to the false prophets; but those who are of God listen to the apostles as having the divine message from the Lord Himself, who came into this world, the Son of God incarnate, the Truth. Blessed be all they who receive His message!

The manner in which the love of God is presented to us in the following verses makes a very blessed contrast to this dark world and the antichrist. The whole family of children are characterized by love, and the nearer we are morally to God the more will this be known.

The three blessed aspects of the love of God have often been insisted upon, and I merely wish to call attention to the subject.

The love of God manifested toward us (v. 9).

Perfected in us (v. 12).

3) Perfected with us (v. 17; see J.N.D. Trans.).

We are called upon to love one another because love is of God, and the character and nature of one born of God is to love. God's love was manifested in the gift of His Son when we had no love for Him; and now, in the midst of a heartless world, we are exhorted to love one another. This has often been spoken of; may we show it in true self-denial and devotedness.

In verse 12 the beginning is the same as in John 1:18- the ending different. It is no longer a question of the presence of Jesus in the world, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father declaring Him; Jesus is in heaven glorified, and the children of God upon earth are to express God's love. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." And the blessed communion of saints follows; for when the Apostle says that we know we abide in Him, he adds not merely that the Holy Spirit has been given, but that He has given us of His Spirit; there is communion, participation. We form one family and have by the Holy Spirit the same blessed objects - the Father and Son.

The third aspect of the love of God carries us right on to the end - love perfected with us. All fear has been driven out, and it is not said, "As He is, so shall we be in heaven," but, "As He is, so are we in this world." That is, we are perfect in Him w h o shall eventually judge the quick and the dead; and knowing the Judge as our blessed Savior, we have no fear of any kind, but the assurance that the same love which was manifest in the gift of the Son to be the propitiation for our sins - that this same love, I say - shall accompany us to the very end of our course.

May our souls be confiding in the God of love, so that we may be kept in the midst of this benighted age, in the full enjoyment of our highest privileges, and be showing in all our conduct that we love one another.

Yieldingness

"Yield yourselves unto the LORD" (2 Chron. 30:8).

Unconditional yielding to the Lord brings us into full unity with Christ to abide in Him, and He in us, and causes us to walk humbly with Him among our fellow men. It places us in sweet fellowship with Him and His people. While waiting for His glorious return, we are privileged to live on His life, nourished, fed, strengthened, and constantly filled with His Spirit and presence. Our part is just to give ourselves to Him, fully recognizing our own worthlessness, and ever abide in HIM.

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