

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 24

by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan

A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 24, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

112 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Christian Truth Volume 24
1. Comments on 1 Peter 3:18-22
2. 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13
3. Acceptance: Genesis 4:2-7
4. An Aged Apostle's Message: Babes
5. An Aged Apostle's Message: Word for All and Fathers
6. An Aged Apostle's Message: Young Men
7. All Things to All Men
8. The Apostles in Council: Obedience to the Word
9. Arise and Possess
10. Bethany: Part 1
11. Bethany: Part 2 and 3
12. Bethany: Part 4 and 5
13. Bethany: Part 6
14. Bethany: Part 7
15. The Bible: Its Unity
16. The Book That Explains All
17. The Captain of the Host of the Lord
18. Jesus Christ: the Same Yesterday and Today
19. A Christian in Polical Power: No Direction
20. Christian Training for Our Children
21. Close Accounts
22. Consistency
23. Diversity and Unity: Each Needed in His Place
24. The Eternal Son of God As Man
25. The Faith of Rahab
26. Faith Versus Unbelief
27. The Family Vault
28. The First Act in Canaan
29. First Years of Christianity: How the Lord Jesus Regarded the Scriptures
30. First Years of Christianity: That Which Was From the Beginning
31. The Girded Servant
32. Gleaning
33. Glorified in His Saints
34. The Good Shepherd and the Sheep
35. The Good Shepherd Gave His Life: David Risked His
36. A Goodly Heritage: Pleasant Places
37. Grace From Above
38. A Great Calm

39. Guidance
40. He Oft Refreshed Me
41. He Prepared His Heart: Marks of a Faithful Servant
42. Headship and Lordship
43. The Heavenly Manna
44. Himself
45. The History of Jonah the Prophet: Practical Lessons for Admonition
46. The Holy Anointing Oil
47. Jehovah Manifests His Character: Jewish History
48. Jesus Christ As Lord
49. Jesus: the Author and Finisher of Faith
50. Job and His Friends: Extract
51. Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
52. John 14:3
53. Labor and Rest
54. The Last Days
55. The Leader's Memorial and His Glory
56. Lessons From King Jehoshaphat: Careful in Choice of Companions
57. Light Affliction? What Did Paul Call Them?
58. Living Devotedness
59. The Love of Christ
60. The Low Place
61. The Man Whose Eyes Were Opened: Part 1
62. The Man Whose Eyes Were Opened: Part 2
63. The Man Whose Eyes Were Opened: Part 3
64. The Manna
65. A Warning About Marriage
66. The "Me" Did It
67. The Midnight Cry
68. Miracles
69. The Mode of Warfare
70. The Need of Grace
71. Newsletter
72. No Chance Work
73. Nourishment for the New Life
74. Numbers 33
75. Obedience and Dependence Are Necessary: Old Prophets and Evidence Deceive
76. Only and That
77. A Few Thoughts on Parental Responsibility
78. Perfectly Acceptable
79. The Address to Philadelphia
80. Thoughts on Philippians 4

- 81.** The Place of Power
- 82.** Prayer and Fasting
- 83.** The Promised Possessions
- 84.** Redeeming the Time
- 85.** The Refiner of Silver
- 86.** Rivers of Living Water: Last Day of the Feast
- 87.** Sanctification: What Is It?
- 88.** Satan and His Ways
- 89.** History of Simon Peter
- 90.** The Lord Places Burdens on Us
- 91.** Things to Think About
- 92.** A Timely Warning
- 93.** True Greatness
- 94.** True Happiness: to Be Found Only in Christ
- 95.** True Love
- 96.** Two Warnings and an Example
- 97.** Waiting Pilgrims
- 98.** Walking With God
- 99.** Walking Worthy of Christ
- 100.** Weakness = Strength: 2 Corinthians 12
- 101.** The Well of Bethlehem: Drink of the Well
- 102.** Choose What Is Excellent in the Path of Faith Which God Selects
- 103.** What Saith the Scriptures?
- 104.** The Wilderness Food
- 105.** The Wisdom and Knowledge of God
- 106.** The Workers at Antioch
- 107.** Worthy of the Lord
- 108.** Ye Are the Epistles of Christ
- 109.** Ye Shall Find Rest: I Will Give You Rest
- 110.** The Year of Jubilee
- 111.** A Letter to Young Christians

Christian Truth Volume 24

Comments on 1 Peter 3:18-22

This passage has occasioned difficulties to readers of Scripture; but it appears clear to me, if we perceive the object of the Spirit of God. The Jews expected a Messiah corporeally present, who should deliver the nation, and exalt the Jews to the summit of earthly glory. But He was not present, we know, in that manner; and the believing Jews had to endure scoffs and the hatred of the unbelieving, on account of their trust in a Messiah who was not present, and who had wrought no deliverance for the people. Believers possessed the salvation of their souls, and they knew Jesus in heaven; but unbelieving men did not care for that. The Apostle therefore cites the case of Noah's testimony. The believing Jews were few in number, and Christ was theirs only according to the Spirit. By the power of that Spirit He had been raised up from the dead. It was by the power of the same Spirit that He had gone - without being corporeally present - to preach in Noah. The world was disobedient (like the Jews in the apostles' days), and eight souls only were saved, even as the believers now are but a little flock. But the spirits of the disobedient were now in prison, because they did not obey Christ present among them by His Spirit in Noah. The long-suffering of God waited then, as now, with the Jewish nation; the result would be the same. It has been so.

This interpretation is confirmed (in preference to that which supposes that the Spirit of Christ preached in hades to souls which had been confined there ever since the flood) by the consideration that in Gen. 6:3 it is said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man;... yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." That is to say, His Spirit should strive, in the testimony of Noah, during a hundred and twenty years and no longer. Now it would be an extraordinary thing that with those persons only (for he speaks only of them) the Lord would strive in testimony after their death. Moreover, we may observe that; in considering this expression to mean the Spirit of Christ in Noah, we only use a well-known phrase of Peter's; for he it is who said, "the Spirit of Christ which was in them [the prophets]" (1 Pet. 1:11).

These spirits then are in prison, because they did not hearken to the Spirit of Christ in Noah. (Compare 2 Pet. 2:5-9.) To this the Apostle adds the comparison of baptism to the ark of Noah in the deluge. Noah was saved through the water; we also; for the water of baptism typifies death, as the deluge, so to speak, was the death of the world. Now Christ has passed through death and is risen. We enter into death in figure in baptism; but it is like the ark, because Christ suffered in death for us, and has come out of it in resurrection, as Noah came out of the deluge to begin, as it were, a new life in a resurrection world.

Now Christ, having passed through death, has atoned for sins; and we, by passing through it in spirit, leave all our sins in it, as Christ did in reality for us; for He was raised up without the sins which He expiated on the cross. And they were our sins; and thus, through the resurrection, we have a good conscience. We pass through death in spirit and in figure by baptism. The peace-giving force of the thing is the resurrection of Christ, after He had accomplished expiation, by which resurrection therefore we have a good conscience.

This is what the Jews had to learn. The Christ was gone up to heaven, all powers and principalities being made subject to Him. He is at the right hand of God. We have therefore not a Messiah on earth, but a good conscience and a heavenly Christ.

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

In this passage Paul puts the coming of the Lord in connection with every Christian affection. This Apostle, who abounded in love toward the saints, desired also that they themselves walk in love, in order to abide in holiness, and to shine in that day. He does not yet state the order of the facts by which this result will be seen, but he mentions the moral truths and the practical grace which prepare it.

"The Lord make you to increase and abound in love... to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness." The love of God possessing the heart is what enables the Christian to walk in holiness. Here we find again the doctrine of John: "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light" (1 John 2:10). It is interesting to see these fundamental elements of faith and of individual blessing forming an integral part of the powerful testimony through which Paul was forming the Church.

"To the end He may stablish your hearts," etc. It is an actual establishing of the heart, but which will be seen in 'its results at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ: 'We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10).

"Before God, even our Father." Paul always sees the Thessalonians in their relationship to the Father. It does not appear that these believers had as yet got beyond the state of babes in the faith. "I write unto you, little children, because ye know the Father" (1 John 2:13).

The sense of verse 13 is this: May God establish your hearts in holiness (now, by the exercise of love), that ye may be (seen) unblameable in holiness, before our God and Father (at that moment) at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. In this passage the coming of Jesus is not presented in the act of our gathering together to Him, when we go to meet Him, but in the act of our coming with Him from the Father's house, after having been in His presence. It is that moment which will show whether we are unblameable.

When Paul, occupied with the coming of Jesus, considers the privilege of faith, he sees the saints all gathered together to the Lord, tasting before Him the common joy. When he considers the responsibility of the Christian's walk, he always sees the appearing of Christ. There can be nothing but joy in our hearts at that blessed moment when we shall go with Jesus into the Father's presence, taking a place which the love of God has given to us, and which the work of Christ has procured to us. It will be otherwise when we return with Jesus. Without losing our position and our blessedness in Him, we shall nevertheless be in a different scene; we shall have reached that solemn moment when the consequences of our responsibility will be manifested.

Acceptance: Genesis 4:2-7

Gen. 4:2-7

It has often been said, Man is naturally religious. Cain felt and owned that it was right to bring something to God, and so it is. But it must be something that He can accept, and there must be submission to His judgment. Cain, doubtless, presented a beautiful and costly present to God, the result of his own labors, the fruit of the ground. He came (and thousands have followed in the same path) as though nothing had happened, denying by his offering the fall, and the presence of sin; void of all sense of sin and ruin, he adds, as it were, insult to injury. His offering, beautiful as it might be, was the fruit of a ground cursed because of man's sin. And could God accept this, a denial of his true condition in the sight of God? The offering was rejected, and the offerer too, for this is the point here. It is not the expiation of sin, but the question of the sinner's acceptance, and this is seen all through Genesis. It is always the burnt offering, never the presentation of blood, and that seven times. Abel, as here; Noah offering of every clean beast and fowl; Abraham (chap. 15) offering the heifer, the she-goat, the ram, the turtle-dove, and pigeon. Isaac on the altar, and the ram offered up in his stead. Jacob offered sacrifices on the mount at the close of his meeting with Laban (chap. 31). Israel, in his journey to Egypt, when he came to Beersheba, offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac (chap. 46). And in every case it is immediately followed by divine favor and blessing.

Abel felt and acknowledged his condition as a lost sinner, and his need of a substitute before God, and also God's holy demands. In Hebrews we read, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts," etc. It is not that Abel was personally any better than Cain - they were both sons of the same father and mother, fallen and outcasts - the value and measure of the acceptance was all in the offering. Abel had that divine principle-faith, without which we cannot please God. His sacrifice was "more excellent" by which-not by his faith or personal worth, but by his sacrifice - he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying, not of his faith or himself, but of his gifts. And what were those gifts? The firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof.

Abel has faith in the love of God, and brings the fat, that which God in all the offerings claimed for Himself, that which gave forth a rich, sweet-smelling savor, speaking to God's heart of a richer, greater sacrifice in the future, when that blessed One, in His deep love for His own, in full and perfect surrender, meeting every holy claim, gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor (Eph. 5:2).

The believer is brought nigh in all this; he stands before God clad in "the best robe," justified, "accepted in the beloved" - "as He is, so are we in this world." Christ is the believer's righteousness, and we are "the righteousness of God in Him." Not only are sins gone, but Christ is there, and the Christian is in Him, his true, unalterable standing before God, where there is no condemnation. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," and nearer the Christian could not be; Christ's own place and relationship is his, and

loved with the same love too, His God and Father ours.

An Aged Apostle's Message: Babes

PART 3

THE BABES

The babes know the Father. They may not, like the fathers, have learned the vanity of this world, and that Christ is everything; and they may not, like the young men, have known conflict with the wicked one; but they have known the Father.

We have already seen that the babes, in common with all Christians, have forgiveness of sins. But there is more than this; they are also in the enjoyment of a present and known relationship. They are children of God, and have the spirit of adoption in their hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

This is no matter of attainment. It is not something gained after years of Christian experience. It is the very starting point of Christianity. The youngest babe in Christ has the forgiveness of sins, possesses the Holy Ghost, and knows the Father. Without these no one has entered upon the ground of Christianity. Christianity is characterized by this great fact: redemption has been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ, who has gone to the Father, and sent down the Holy Ghost to take His place in and with believers, and to set them consciously in the position and relationship of a glorified Christ on high. These babes are in this position and in these relationships. They are in Christ, and His relationships are theirs, and they have the Holy Ghost as the power of it all, and as the divine source of all spiritual intelligence. In all this there is no difference between a babe and a father. They all have the same position and the same relationships in Christ. And this, surely, is most blessed.

Now we have seen that the great danger to which the young men are exposed is to be found in the allurements of the world. As yet this is not the special danger of the babes. One who has just been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's Son, cares little for the world. The children of Israel, standing on the shores of the Red Sea which they had just crossed, and where they had seen their enemies engulfed in death under the judgment of Jehovah, would not have been easily persuaded to return to the land of bondage where they had groaned in "anguish of spirit" under the lash of the taskmaster. The rest they now enjoyed was too fresh and sweet for that. But after they had in a measure forgotten the rigors and hardships of that cruel bondage, and grown weary of the wilderness journey, and loathed the bread of heaven, then they lusted after the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic of Egypt, and were ready to turn back.

So it is now. One who has groaned under Satan's taskmasters, making bricks without straw, when set free from this bondage by the power of God, enjoys the sweetness of liberty too well to return at once to the world. While the heart overflows with praise to God, singing, "The LORD,... hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song, and He is become my salvation," the world has no charms. Its cruel bondage is remembered, and the sweetness of freedom is enjoyed, and the heart turns away from

the world to find its satisfaction in the deliverer, looking on to a habitation with Him. "He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation." (Ex. 15.)

But the babes have their special danger as well as the young men. One thing that marks a babe is the readiness with which it receives everything that people say. So with a babe in Christ as to spiritual things. They are simple and artless in their reception of the truth, and eager to increase in knowledge; and the enemy lays hold of this very thing as an occasion to seduce them, and lead them away from Christ. Their great danger lies in their being seduced by false teachers. Satan seduces the young men through the world, and the babes through antichrists.

The Apostle affectionately warns these simple babes of their danger. "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." The antichrist is coming. He will come according to the unbelief of the Jews, denying that Jesus was the Christ, and so will come in his own name, not in the name of the Father, as Jesus said to the Jews: "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." John 5:43. When he comes, it will not be at the first as denying that there is a Christ, but as claiming to be the Christ Himself, until he has seduced his victims; and then the mask will be thrown off, and he will deny the Father and the Son. This is the true mark of the antichrist. He will be a liar from the first, because he will deny that Jesus is the Christ, as the Apostle says, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" Afterward he will deny both the Father and the Son, as the Apostle again says, "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." This gives his full character when all is unmasked. He will come also with terrible satanic power, by which he will darken men's souls, and lead them into open apostasy and rebellion against God. He will exalt himself above all that is called God or is worshiped, and sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. He will get his power from the dragon, so that his coming will be "after the working of Satan," and this "with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." He will make fire come down from heaven in the sight of men to deceive them; and he will make an image to the beast (the imperial head of the ten kingdom confederacy and raised up by the power of Satan), and to this image he will give breath so that it should speak, and cause the death of all who refuse to do it homage. Thus he will delude men, and lead them to believe that he is God, with power to create, and work miracles. But the wonders he performs are "lying wonders," by which he will seduce the mass of the Jews and apostate Christendom after the true saints have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Men receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved; and for this reason God will send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, and that all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2; Rev. 13). All this display of satanic power, and malignant hatred and opposition to God, will take place in the closing days of what the Apostle calls "the last time."

Now the little children had heard that antichrist was coming; but the Apostle would have them understand that they were exposed to danger of a similar nature - a seducing power of Satan leading men into apostasy. "Even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." The presence of these proved that it was already "the last time." Failure had come into Christianity. Seducing spirits were leading men into apostasy. This would culminate at the end in the great apostasy under the man of sin, which will bring down the judgment of God on apostate

Jews and on apostate Christendom. Thus we may recognize the last time. Antichrists had gone out from among Christians. They were not true Christians, and never had been, else they would have remained. Their going out manifested their true character. They were apostates, enemies, and liars, because they denied that Jesus was the Christ. This is the spirit of antichrist, and so the Apostle calls them "antichrists." They might not deny openly the Father, but they denied the Son, and "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." They were seducers of the people of God, as all false teachers are.

But the babes in Christ are not without resource in the presence of these false teachers. Their going out from among Christians might tend to shake the faith of the babes, and their subtle arguments might seem difficult to answer, but the babes have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things. They know the truth, and that no lie is of the truth. The anointing which they have received abides in them, and they need not that any man teach them. They have that in them by which they are able to discern the truth, and reject all that is opposed to it. It is not that they do not need teaching, for the Apostle is very carefully teaching them in this very scripture. But they do not need man's teaching. The Holy Ghost teaches them, and fortifies them against false doctrine. God may use an instrument, but the teaching must be divine. There is an action of the Holy Ghost, both in the instrument and in the one who is taught. "The same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie." It is by the Holy Ghost that the teaching is given and received. He is in the babes, and is truth, and is no lie; thus the babes can discern the truth, and detect what is false. Weak though they may be, the Holy Ghost is able to keep them from the seductions of the enemy. But this connects itself with another most important principle; namely, that of cleaving to the truth we have already received-the truth in which the Person of Christ has been revealed to our souls.

"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father."

We have received Christ the Son of God in receiving the truth, for He is the truth, and He is that which was from the beginning. If this abides in us, we abide in the Son and in the Father. There is living and abiding dependence on Christ-cleaving to Him as our life, and as the sum of all truth and of all blessing. The Holy Ghost-the anointing- is the power of all this, connecting Himself with the truth in our souls, and at once challenging every lie that seeks entrance. This then is the security of the babes against false teaching. We are to cleave to Christ, and give heed to the teaching of the Holy Ghost, who concerns Himself with the truth in us, and resists all that is not of the truth, who "is truth, and is no lie." By Him we know the truth, and that no lie is of the truth.

The Lord keep us, beloved brethren, in these last and closing days, when error in every form is stalking abroad like a noisome pestilence, before which many fall as victims. May we be content with the truth, and the truth alone. All that is not of the truth is a lie, and of Satan, the enemy of all truth. If we have the truth, we have Christ, the Son, and in Him the Father; and we have the Holy Ghost as the power of it in our souls. What would we have more? Is not this enough until we reach the glory itself? Even there Christ will be all.

An Aged Apostle's Message: Word for All and Fathers

In the first chapter of his first epistle, the Apostle John presents to us the Word of life-the eternal Word-the eternal Son of the Father-in whom eternal life subsisted, and in whom, as a man, it was manifested in time down here in this world; and all this that we might have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Then there is a message declaring God's inflexible holiness-light admitting no degree of darkness-speaking at the same time of the blood that cleanses from all sin, and gives fitness to be in the light of that holy presence.

In the opening of the next chapter we have, in the advocate with the Father, the divine provision for failure in the walk of those who have been brought into the light, and the means of restoration to communion when it has been broken by sin. Then follow the great characteristic traits of the divine life in man-obedience and love. These were perfectly displayed in Christ; and Christ having become our life, these are the tests of reality in us.

Having established these fundamental principles, the aged Apostle goes on to address his children, first, all together, and then in three classes - "fathers," "young men," and "babes." There is that which was common to all; and then there is that which was peculiar to each of these three classes, and all presented in beautiful order.

We will first look at that which was common to all. That was forgiveness of sins. He writes to them all as having been forgiven. In doing so, he calls them "children." The word "little" is not in the original. When he divides them into three classes, "fathers," "young men," and "little children," the last is a different word, which does not mean little "children" or "babes." But in the first instance it is simply "children," and the term includes all that the Apostle addresses in the epistle_ the same as in verse 1 and in verse 28 of the same chapter. "I write unto you,... children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." He does not write to them in order that they might receive forgiveness, but because they had already received it. He wrote to them as those whom God had forgiven for the name's sake of His beloved Son.

He had already written that which would test the reality of those who bore the name of Christ, and which would distinguish between the true and the false. But this was not intended in any wise to shake the confidence of any who had really been born into the family of God. Those who, without reality, and in carelessness of heart, had taken a place among the children of God, might well tremble at what the Apostle had written, and which necessarily condemned them, as when he says, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk, in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." "He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

These were solemn and heart-searching words before which the careless or the hypocrite, or the false teachers, might well pause and consider their bearings, and learn in the truth whether their

profession was real, or whether they were blindly drifting on in darkness, soon to be plunged into the dark abyss of eternal woe. But solemn as are the warnings given to such in God's Word, they are never intended to shake, or disturb in any degree, the peace of those who have believed on the Lord Jesus, and who are seeking with purpose of heart to serve and follow Him. On the contrary, this aged Apostle and father seeks to assure his children in the most happy way, by telling them that he writes to them for the very reason that their sins had been forgiven them for Jesus' name's sake. Not a cloud would he throw over the mind of the youngest or the feeblest in all the family of God. He would have all in the full blessed consciousness, and unclouded assurance, that they were in the light, and without a spot upon 'them-the youngest babe as much as the most aged father, or the most holy apostle, washed and made whiter than snow in "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son," which "cleanseth us from all sin."

And blessed it is to our poor hearts to know that the knowledge of forgiveness is not something to be attained only when the Christian course has been nearly run-perhaps only on a deathbed or, it may be, not till the poor storm-tossed soul stands before the great white throne, overwhelmed with terror, and crushed with dark uncertainty, while it awaits the sentence which is to fix its eternal destiny. No, dear reader, forgiveness of sins meets us at the very threshold of Christianity, and the assurance of it greets our souls the moment we believe the gospel of our salvation. Christ is the meeting point between our souls and God. But it is a Christ who died, who was buried, who was raised again; and the moment we meet God in Him, we find Him a Christ who has borne our sins, having been delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. Thus all is settled between our souls and God, and "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 4:24, 25; 5:1.)

Christian attainments there surely are, but forgiveness of sins is not one of them; for if I have not forgiveness of sins I am not a Christian at all. My sins are still between my soul and God, and exclude me from His holy presence, leaving me -under judgment and exposed to eternal wrath. Forgiveness cannot, therefore, be a Christian attainment at all. I know there may be such a thing as being forgiven, and not knowing it; but this is not a normal condition of soul. It is a result, either of wrong teaching, or of inadequate apprehension of the truth. The very gospel that announces salvation to the lost, and forgiveness to the guilty, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, gives also, in the most assuring terms, the knowledge of forgiveness to all who believe it. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Christ Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13:38, 39.

In such terms as these the blessed gospel of God's grace speaks to the poor sinner, and such assurance it gives to the one who believes it. It speaks unconditional and eternal pardon to him who, falling down before God as helpless and guilty and lost, believes in Jesus; and it assures such a one that his sins are blotted out forever, and his guilt canceled by the atoning blood of the cross, never to be brought to light again. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," is the conscience-purging word of the blessed God who pardons through faith in Jesus' blood. And the words John writes to his children are in happy confirmation of this blessed truth. "I write unto you,... children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." Happy children! Their sins may have been many, yea, more than the hairs of their heads, and they may be conscious that they are poor, feeble, failing creatures still; and Satan may thunder in their consciences, and

seek to accuse and condemn, but the word of Him who cannot lie sustains their souls in unclouded peace. 'Your sins are forgiven you.'

And it is "for His name's sake." Were it for anything in us, we might well question and doubt and fear. But if it is "for His name's sake," who in heaven or earth or hell can challenge our title? God has owned that blessed Savior, and exalted His name above all. He has given Him a name that is above every name. Before that name all thrones and dominions must yield subjection, and every knee-all angels, all men, all demons-must bow. It is THE NAME OF JESUS. It is the name of Him who suffered on the cross, whose blood was shed for the putting away of sin, who by His atoning sacrifice has infinitely glorified God, and who has vanquished forever the adversary of our souls. "For His name's sake" God forgives.

Dear reader, have you believed God's testimony to that wonderful name? Have you believed in the name of Jesus? Then listen to that dear old Apostle that knew Him so well, and the cleansing power of His precious blood, and hear him addressing you among the children to whom he writes these words: "I write unto you,... children, because your sins ARE forgiven you FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE."

THE FATHERS

We have already seen that among those the Apostle calls his "children," there are "fathers," "young men," and "babes," or "little children." The "fathers" are those who have grown old in the truth. The "babes" are those newly born into the family of God. The "young men" are a class between, who have the strength of manhood, being no longer children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine; nor yet having reached that experimental knowledge by which they have learned the utter vanity of everything apart from Christ. The "fathers," on the contrary, have had the full experience and, like Solomon, have written "vanity" on all that is under the sun. They have learned to know Christ as their only and enduring portion. "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." 1 John 2:13.

It will be noticed that the Apostle addresses each class separately-the "fathers," then the "young men," then the "babes." In verse 13 all three classes are addressed. Then in verse 14 the "fathers" and "young men" are addressed the second time; and in verse 18, the "babes," the message running on to the close of verse 27.

We will now look more particularly at the message to the "fathers." We have already quoted from verse 13, where they are addressed the first time. When they are addressed the second time, in verse 14, the message is the same, and there is nothing added. It is simply, "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." And this is most beautiful and instructive. There was nothing to warn them against, and there was nothing new or further to set before them-nothing which they did not already have. They had Christ-"Him that is from the beginning"-and that was enough. There was nothing to go back to-nothing to go forward to. To go back would be to return to the world which they had found to be only vanity. There would be no gain in that. And they could not go forward to anything beyond without giving up Christ and Christianity, and there would be no gain in that. Christ was their, all. They knew Him as the sum of all their blessing, their enduring, their eternal portion. This is what characterized the fathers in Christ.

I have said there was nothing to warn them against. They were acquainted with the flesh and its ways, with the world and its attractions, and had judged both as worthless and evil. It was not something merely that they had been taught; they had learned it experimentally. In their own experience they had proved what the flesh is in its utter insubordination to God, and had learned that God's judgment of it in the cross and death of Christ was the only remedy for it. It was a judgment which was according to truth and holiness, a judicial ending before God of what was in a state of fixed and eternal enmity against His nature, and incapable of being subject to His holy law (Rom. 8:7). They had learned the truth of this judgment, and had bowed to it experimentally in their own souls. It was not something they needed to learn now, even in experience. They knew it in such a way as not to need any warning against it.

So also it was as to the world which is in enmity against God as well as the flesh, and which also has been morally judged in the cross. To the fathers the world was but the scene in which the flesh flourishes—that to which the flesh in its nature and desires fully answers, and which furnishes the food on which the flesh subsists. Moreover, the world had cast out and crucified God's well beloved Son, and thus its whole status and condition was laid bare. The fathers had learned its true character. They knew it as an evil system estranged from God, and governed by Satan's will and power. Whatever might be its pretension, whatever its glitter and show, whatever its allurements and enticing temptations, to the fathers it was all a vain show, a scene of gilded sin and wickedness which could not endure in its midst the presence of the holy and blessed Son of God. And besides, there was nothing in it that could satisfy the soul or give real joy and happiness. To them it was practically a judged scene in which they had neither part nor lot. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, they had been delivered from it; and in their practical life and spiritual mode of existence, they were outside of it, and had no desire to return to it. Happy deliverance!

But all this experience had been gone through in connection with the truth of Christ. Apart from Christ these things could not be learned. And the result of the experience was that Christ was known as the only worthy object of the heart. All else proved to be but vanity. When all else failed, Christ remained the same, the faithful, unchanging One, "The same yesterday, and to-day, and forever," the One who will remain the same throughout eternity, filling and satisfying the soul, when experience has become a thing only of the past, and when flesh and the world are no more.

This blessed Christ the fathers know. They have proved Him as the One in whom they can always trust. In all their varied experiences and trials, they have found Him faithful. In every time of need He has proved the succorer of their, souls. He has been their joy in sorrow, their strength in weakness, their stay in adversity, their unfailing resource at all times. And He is the eternal Sun of their souls, the chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely, their, all in all for time and eternity. They have followed Him, they have served Him, they have walked with Him, they have communed with Him, and they know Him, not merely by report, but by intimate and personal acquaintance. Blessed knowledge! It is what we shall have in eternity. Only then it will be in glory and in a fullness far transcending aught that is known in the poor earthly tabernacle here. But the same thing is known in the soul now that will be known then, though the soul be fettered and held within bounds and limits. Now we see through a glass darkly, then face to face. Now we know in part, then we shall know as we are known. There will be no fetters, no bonds then—nothing to hinder or cloud the glorified vision. Christ will be known then in all the brightness and blessedness

it is possible to communicate to His glorified people.

Yet even now, though it be not in the same brightness or fullness, because of the body in which we still groan, through all our varied experiences Christ reveals Himself to our souls in a most blessed way, and we learn to know Him as friends know friends-not merely as the One who has saved us from wrath and judgment, but as the One who is ever with us, bearing us on His heart, sustaining, comforting, blessing, and drawing our hearts and affections out to His own blessed Person. The fullness of His grace meeting all our need by the way is realized; the varied beauties and glories and perfection of His Person and character are discovered; and His unchanging and eternal love fills the heart and satisfies the affections He Himself has awakened. Blessed, glorious Christ! infinite delight of the Father! eternal brightness of God's glory! light and joy and center of courts above! Object worthy of eternal homage and praise! may we learn to know Him more and more. May we so learn to know Him that before the brightness of His presence every other object may fade away, leaving Himself the alone Object of our hearts, our all-sufficient, our present and eternal portion.

An Aged Apostle's Message: Young Men

We have already seen that the fathers are characterized by having "known Him that is from the beginning." Here (1 John 2:13) we learn that the young men are characterized by having "overcome the wicked one." In his second address to the young men he mentions the secret of their strength, and warns them against the world. Loving the world and loving the Father are incompatible. All the elements which make the world what it is, have their source in the world, not in the Father. And then the world passes away, and its lust, while he that does the will of God abides forever.

Let us notice these several points.

The young men have overcome the wicked one. The strength of divine life is in them and, in the conflicts they have sustained with the enemy, they have been crowned with victory. It is not that all conflict is ended, and all danger past, but they have realized in conflict a power which is superior to that of the enemy. If they have a powerful foe, they know and possess a power greater than his, which they have, and to use, and the enemy is put to flight. They are characterized by this remarkable fact, that they "have overcome the wicked one." Satan who rules the darkness of this world, and who is the great enemy of God's people, cannot stand before these young men. This is a wondrous fact that may well fill us with holy boldness and courage in meeting this relentless and untiring foe.

The divine life, directed by the Word of God, is the secret of strength in the young men. "Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." In Ephesians 6, where it is a question of conflict with spiritual powers of wickedness, the Apostle says, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." This is the source of all strength for conflict. In ourselves we have no strength, but in Him we are strong. Christ is the believer's life. and this is directed in the believer by the Word of God. Against this, Satan has no power. When Satan meets Christ in the believer, he meets One who has already vanquished him, and destroyed his power. In death (expression of utter weakness) Christ destroyed him who had the power of death, so that the weakness of Christ is stronger than the power of Satan. Satan did his worst against Christ at the cross, but Christ is risen from the dead in the power of a life that Satan could not touch. Resurrection proclaimed complete, eternal victory for Christ. Satan well knows that he is a vanquished foe and that, at the appointed time, Christ will cast him into the lake of fire. If we meet Satan, therefore, in the power of Christ, he immediately flees. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7).

It is not only that Christ has personally gained the victory over Satan, but He did this for our deliverance. He took part in flesh and blood, "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. 2:14, 15. In the death of Christ, all that Satan could use to terrify the conscience, as well as all that could bring down the judgment of God, was swept away; and thus the believer is emancipated from the condition of bondage and fear into which he had been

plunged by sin and the power of Satan.

But this is not all. The believer is made a partaker of divine life. He possesses the very life in which Christ's victory over Satan was displayed-life in resurrection-life as Christ imparted it to His disciples when He breathed on them after His resurrection-life in the Spirit. Christ was made alive in the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18); the believer lives in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25); and he has "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," as a delivering power (Rom. 8:2). It is life in Christ, of which the Holy Ghost is the spring and power in the believer. This life, Satan cannot touch. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18).

In this divine life lies the secret of the young men's strength. They have the energy of Christ in them, and the Word of God abiding in them, directing the divine life according to all that He is as an object filling the heart, and governing its desires. The Word of God expresses what that life is in all its varied characteristics; and if the Word abides in us, it forms the heart by filling it with Christ as an object, reproducing in us, His life; as Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ." And if this is what Satan finds in us, what can he do? He is in the presence of One who has already conquered him, and he can only flee.

How blessed then to "abide in Him," as the Apostle exhorts in verse 28, and to have God's Word abiding in us, as in verse 14, so that we may always be able to overcome the wicked one. The power of Satan has been broken in the cross, but he has many wives, and these we need to withstand. "We are not ignorant of his devices," as the Apostle said to the Corinthians, and we need to watch lest he "get an advantage" (2 Cor. 2:11). Our safety lies in having God's Word abiding in us. It is this that forms the heart, according to Christ, and directs the movements of the divine life in the soul. It becomes also the sword of the Spirit to the Christian warrior, and enables him to repel every assault of the wicked one. The Word is the Word of God's grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:32); and it is also the sword of the Spirit. May we prize it, both for what it gives us and for what it preserves us against.

3) We now have a warning against the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This is indeed a solemn word for any Christian whose heart is set upon anything in this world. Love of the world and love of the Father do not go together. They are opposed to each other in every way. The world has murdered God's Son, and this has revealed its state of utter enmity against God. God has indeed raised Him up from the dead, and crowned Him with glory and honor at His own right hand; and the Holy Ghost has come down to witness to the fact of His resurrection, and of His exaltation to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins; but the world rejects Him still. Christ is not of the world. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" are of the world; but Christ is of the Father, and the world has hated Him, and cast Him out.

We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that our blessed Lord Jesus is rejected in this world. Go where you will-into the busy throng, society, fashionable circles, even among the mass of professing Christians-and talk of Christ or His things, and there is no relish for it, no response in people's hearts. They turn away, or their mouths are closed. Many a professing Christian is dumb the moment Christ's name is mentioned. And in many instances conversation on this topic will not be tolerated, while the most insignificant bit of neighborhood gossip will be borne or even relished.

Anything and everything but Christ! The very name-the thought of Him even-is distasteful.

And not only is there no heart to receive Christ, but there is positive enmity against Him. By the verdict of this world Jesus was delivered up to die, and was nailed as a malefactor to the cross. People may say now that the Jews and Pilate did that, and may thus seek to clear themselves of all responsibility. But Pilate was the representative of the world power at Jerusalem when he delivered Jesus up to die, and thus involved the world in the guilt of that terrible deed. Has the world ever repented of this awful sin? Let its own course answer. A message from heaven has been calling to repentance, but the world has not repented. For more than eighteen hundred years God has been, as it were, beseeching men to be reconciled, but the world remains still in enmity. Through grace individuals have repented, and have been reconciled to God; but the world, "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely," has no ear to hear, and continues in its course, ruled by "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

The world is guilty of the blood of Jesus, and yet goes on amusing itself as if nothing had happened. The hum of business, the cares of life, the sound of the harp and the organ, the theater, the concert, the ball, and the ten thousand varieties of amusement, worldly pleasures, the worldly follies, are used of Satan to ensnare his victims, and drown the cry of guilt in the conscience until death carries them away, or judgment closes over the scene.

Beloved brethren, are we practically outside of all this? Have we found God's Christ in glory an object that so fills and satisfies the heart, that for us the world has lost all its charms? Where are our hearts? Where are our affections? Are they with Christ in glory? or with the world that crucified Him?

But perhaps some reader of these lines is saying to himself, "It is impossible that this world which has rejected and slain my blessed Lord should draw away my heart from Him who loved me and gave Himself for me." But this is the very danger to which the young men are exposed. It is this that they are warned against, and if there had been no danger there would have been no warning. There is that in us which answers to the world, and nothing but the Word of God abiding in us, and keeping us in communion with Christ, can preserve us from its allurements. The Apostle Paul had to record of one who had labored with him, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." 2 Tim. 4:10. Sorrowful words! "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10:12. An apostle's presence was not enough to keep Demas. Our strength is only in Christ. If we abide in Him, and His Word abide in us, we shall be kept securely. Otherwise our hearts will be drawn away, and we shall find our affections entangled in a world that is far from God. "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" is written upon all that is under the sun, and all is estranged from God. The fathers have learned this experimentally, but the young men have it yet to learn; and unless they abide in their stronghold, having the sword in readiness, they will surely be overcome by the wiles of the devil.

4) "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." The judgment of God is coming upon this world, both as a system that has fallen under the power of Satan, and as a physical world that has been ruined by the presence of sin. "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the

flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Luke 17:26-30. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but these words of the Lord Jesus shall not pass away. The world may go on with its business, its pleasures, its follies and its sins, forgetting its guilt in murdering God's Son; but God has not forgotten. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord with a heart like adamant, guilty of his brother's blood which cried from the ground, and sought to make himself happy in a world far from God. Hundreds of years rolled on, and the descendants of Cain multiplied on the earth. A city was built, the sound of the hammer was heard on brass and iron, and the harp and the organ made mirth for those whose hearts knew not God. Thus the world moved on in its course, and perhaps Abel and his blood were quite forgotten; but the flood came and swept them all away.

The blood of Christ indeed speaks better things than the blood of Abel. It cries from the throne and speaks pardon and peace to every repentant sinner. The redeemed in glory, and the gathering of Israel, and the blessing of the nations in a future day, all witness that the blood of Christ speaks better things than the blood of Abel. But the rejection of that Savior and the shedding of that blood, have crowned the world's guilt; and He who once came in grace, will come again in judgment. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." 2 Thess. 1:7-9. This is terrible indeed to think of, but it will come as surely as the flood came in the days of Noah. It is the state of the world in its enmity against God that will bring down this judgment. O beloved brethren, have we learned the true character of this world? Have we seen it in the light of the cross as the scene of Satan's power, and characterized by unrelentless enmity against the Son of God? Are our hearts far away from the scene of evil over which God's judgment is about to sweep as a flame of fire? "Remember Lot's wife." She was outside of Sodom, but her heart was in the doomed scene, and she looked back, and became a monument of God's judgment. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Peter goes farther and tells us not only of the judgment of the wicked, but of the dissolution of the heavens and the earth as well. The old world perished by water in the days of Noah. "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Pet. 3:7, 10.

Thus, reader, we have God's estimate of the world, and His judgment of it. It is morally corrupt and guilty of the blood of God's well beloved Son, and it is doomed to judgment. However bright its allurements, however attractive its charms, and however great its promises of good, Satan is behind it all with his enchantments to charm and to seduce his victims, and make them slaves to his power. "The whole world lies in the wicked one" (1 John 5:19; J.N.D. Trans.). May the Lord keep us from listening to the voice of the charmer. May we so cleave to Christ that Satan can have no power against us. This is our only safety. If the heart is full of Christ, and God's Word abides in

us, forming the heart and governing all its movements, Satan with all his allurements through the world will be driven back. Thus it was with Christ. Satan found nothing in Him but the Word of God. It was the sword of the Spirit. Three times over He was made to feel the edge of that trusty blade, "It is written," "It is written," "It is written," and his enchantments had no power. Alas! too often he finds something else in us - "lust of the flesh," "lust of the eyes," or "the pride of life," and then we fall a prey to his seductions, and have to learn by bitter experience what the world is, and the folly of giving it a place in our hearts and affections.

May we be kept with the Word of God abiding in us- the Word by which we were born again, and by which we do the will of God. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

All Things to All Men

1 Cor. 9:19-22

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

This teaches us the exquisite lesson of self-denial in order to meet the condition of others with a direct view to their salvation. This passage is frequently used for the direct opposite; namely, for self-indulgence, and mixing ourselves up with all sorts of wrong things, under the plea of being "all things to all men"; and in result, instead of gaining them and delivering them out of the evil and folly in which they are involved, we fall under the power of these things ourselves, to the great dishonor of our Lord and the serious damage of souls.

The Apostles in Council: Obedience to the Word

Acts 15

With the novel sight of a so-called Ecumenical Council recently in session at Rome, under the presidency of the Pope as the assumed successor of the Apostle Peter, one turns instinctively to the inspired account of the only council at which Peter and the other apostles were present, to learn what likeness, or the reverse, can be traced between that and the one which was held at Jerusalem.

To Jerusalem Paul and Barnabas went up, with others whose names are not recorded, delegated by the assembly at Antioch to confer with the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. But Paul went up by revelation (Gal. 2:2). God's mind as to his journey thither, and conference with the apostles, had just been clearly expressed. He went as delegated by the assembly, but he went because divinely directed. Neither Peter, nor James, nor John, summoned a council, and invited Paul and Barnabas to come up to it. It was the arrival of these laborers with others from Antioch which brought the question to a point, and made the apostles and elders come together about this matter.

It was an epoch of great importance in the Church. The truth had spread among the Gentiles, and the great center of missionary work was removed from Jerusalem to Antioch. Peter and John at an earlier day had gone out from Jerusalem to Samaria, seen the work there, acknowledged it, and returned to the metropolis of Judea. Now Paul and Barnabas had started from Antioch on a journey so fruitful in blessed results, and returned to that assembly with tidings that God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. To stop this work, if possible, was the aim of the enemy, and means were shortly found for attempting it. Certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." The din of controversy was now heard, to be silenced only by the letter from the council at Jerusalem. There, and there alone, could the evil which threatened the Church be averted. To it, therefore, Paul and Barnabas went up, where the full results at which these false teachers aimed were unequivocally brought out. At Antioch they had only urged on the Gentiles circumcision after the manner of Moses. But at Jerusalem the real aim of this teaching was fearlessly divulged: "It was needful to circumcise them [the Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law."

There, if anywhere, the supporters of this doctrine could carry their point. To settle this, the apostles and brethren met. The discussion was doubtless earnest; it was certainly free; and, though Peter was present, he did not preside, or interfere with the freedom of speech of any of its members. Many, apparently, spoke before he did, and Paul and Barnabas and James spoke after him. Peter's speech was important, but the remarks of James were most needful. Peter's address was a fitting prelude to the recital by Paul and Barnabas of the miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them, as that of James was a fitting conclusion. Peter reminded them of what God had done by him for the Gentiles, and how those from among the Jews who believed should be saved even as the converts from the Gentiles. James took different ground,

and turned to Scripture, which threw light on the subject.

They were subject to the Word, and hence, after James had spoken, all discussion ceased; and the conclusion he expressed was adopted and committed to writing: "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."

But the use of the Word here demands more than a passing notice. The question was one which evidently stirred many hearts. It was felt, on both sides, to be a vital one; hence God's mind about it was most important. Never before had there been such a gathering of the Church for consultation; apostles and prophets were there with the Holy Ghost in their midst (v. 28), yet no fresh revelation was that day vouchsafed them. The wisdom of this we can surely discern; God would teach us the competency of the written Word to decide questions of doctrine and practice which concern the welfare of the assembly. No new interpretation was then brought out, nor the passage quoted opened up by any new light which James threw on it. He quoted Amos, who had predicted that on some of the Gentiles the Lord's name should be called. Hence the work of grace among them was not a matter on which the Word was silent, though they at Jerusalem, till that work began, might not have anticipated it.

Whose Word was it? It was His who maketh these things known "from the beginning." But what about circumcising the Gentiles? On this the Word was silent. It clearly intimated blessing for the Gentiles without their becoming Jews; but, though this was foretold, of their being circumcised there was not a word. Should they then supplement the Word? No, they bowed to it. They interpreted its silence correctly. It said nothing about the question, so they imposed no such condition on the Gentiles. Thus the very silence of Scripture was shown to be expressive and, must we not add, instructive. And in this assembly where four, certainly, out of the eight writers of the New Testament were present, three of whom took such a prominent part, all bowed to the silence of the Word as expressing God's mind on the subject.

But, while giving a voice to the silence of Scripture, they could not allow anything it had said to be disregarded; so the word of God to Noah and his sons was brought forward as binding on believers from among the Gentiles, as it had been on the Jews. God was wiser than man. Man's deductions from analogy as to what was suited for God's people were all wrong, for the Lord had said nothing about it; but to what it had said, though for ages the Gentiles had lost it, now that they owned the authority of the Lord, they must submit. How carefully the door was closed against all theories of development to bind men's consciences where God had not enjoined it, and how clearly they taught that what the

Word did say, believers must hearken to and obey.

Thus the council ended, and the discomfiture of the pharisaic party in the assembly, and the joy of all the Gentile converts, and an example for after ages of perfect subjection to Scripture, as containing His mind, who makes things known from the beginning.

Arise and Possess

Joshua, 1:1-9

God had given Israel a leader to bring them into their promised possession; and, as a preliminary to their conflict, He taught Israel definite principles to insure success, which are stated in the exhortation opening the book.

From the study of divine exhortations to the Christian, we learn that we are to live, or walk, in the power of what we have. God does not bid sinners, dead in sins, to walk in His ways; but, having given us life in Christ when we were dead in sins, He bids us walk as Christ walked. God does not require the sinner in his spiritual paralysis to do one single work of righteousness; having given us, when in that condition, strength through Christ, He exhorts thus: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13). God enables His people to do, and He gives the desire to perform.

The exhortation, opening the book of Joshua, is based upon the fact that the land belonged to Israel by divine promise. On that ground God commanded them to "arise" and "possess" it. The beauties of the plain of Jericho, noted for its countless flowers, the wealth of Canaan's cornfields, olives, vineyards, and mountains out of which they should dig "brass," spread themselves before the eyes of Israel. The brooks of water, and depths that spring out of valleys and hills, were before them. One thing only was requisite to, the enjoyment of their portion—they must "arise", and possess. Arise, believer, and enter into the blessings wherewith God has blessed us in Christ. All things are yours; arise, enter in.

The land across the river, which spread itself before the eyes of Israel, was the evidence of the faithfulness of God respecting His promises. The sight stirred the soul of the people. Before them was their home, with its wealth and delights, the gift of their God who had brought them out of Egypt.

What shall the Christian say who obtains a sight, ever so feeble, of his spiritual blessings? He sits down and ponders over the words, "Blessed... with all_ spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3); and as he meditates upon them, and owns that the blessing is his, a fresh zeal enters his soul. He reads on, and gives his earnest Amen to the inspired prayer, that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding [or heart] being enlightened; that ye may know" (vv. 17, 18).

God attracts to Himself by the display of what is ours in Christ. "Arise."

It was harvest time, the time of the year's richest good, when Israel thus saw their place of blessing; but the Jordan (the Descender) on its impetuous way barred them out, for "Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest." The river was swift, wide, and deep. What then was to be done? Obey the word of the living God. Go forward, and leave God to deal with the

difficulty. Each of us has his own difficulties in the path to full blessing of the soul. "I cannot be truly devoted to Christ until my aged relation dies," said one to us not many years ago, "for if I were, it would break her heart." "If I were decided for Christ," said a man to us, with tears, "my friends would give me no rest." Arise, go forward, believe God, and leave the difficulty with Him.

"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you," is a deeply practical word, for beholding the cornfields was not eating their fruits, nor was gazing on the mountains, digging out their wealth; the one condition which the Lord imposed upon His people for actual possession was, that as a matter of fact they should enter, and have foothold on the land which He had given them.

No ability to map out doctrines or dispensations, no power to see what this epistle teaches, or that prophet tells, is of itself practical spiritual possession; not what the eye takes in, but what the foot covers, is experimentally our own. The eye directs the foot, and the further the foot goes, the more the eye sees. The eye beholds a vast expanse, the foot covers a very small space; and that little portion only of the truth of God which we have laboriously trodden is, as a matter of realization, our own.

All is ours in Christ; but such of our blessings only are ours, in our spiritual apprehension, as we have gained by the Spirit's teaching. Real possession becomes the portion of those who by individual contest, step by step, have won ground- "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." Are we ready to say, "How little have I covered with the sole of my foot; how small is the area that I have really won"? God is for us. Be strong, and of a good courage. Win in the strength God gives. Get direct from Him; shun that secondhand knowledge which never avails in the day of difficulty, nor gives strength in the hour of conflict. "Foot"-possessors in the Church of God are comparatively few. Many are geographers, who can map out the varied doctrines of the Bible; few are travelers, who describe what this and that blessing is, having themselves found its preciousness.

In the purposes of Jehovah, Israel's possession was vast: "From the wilderness of this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast." Now, save for a very limited period (1 Kings 4:21), Israel has not entered upon these lengths and breadths; that day of permanent possession is yet to come. The Christian's portion in Christ is immeasurable; but today is his day of possession, for God, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3), has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). Yet, what does this "all" mean? The most well taught believer is simply learning what it is, as he advances day by day in the truth of God. The more he sees what the blessings are, the less does his apprehension seem to him to be, for God's gifts are, like Himself, infinite.

More than the bare knowledge that God has made all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places ours in Christ, is necessary to stimulate true Christian zeal; personal communion with Christ Himself, as to the truth of these heavenly blessings, is needed. Jehovah said to Joshua, "I will be with thee:

I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee"; and the Lord Jesus in effect has said the same to each believer. He will not allow the heart to sink; He will not fail to uphold us with His hand. We have,

therefore, promised and secured to us, His abiding presence, His unfailing grace and strength, and the assurance of His never forsaking us.

In the exhortation before us there are three calls to strength and to courage; the first, because the possessions belong to God's people; the second, because in obedience to the word, success is assured; the third, because the Lord Himself is with His people.

As to the first, Christ being, risen from the dead, and seated above all power at God's right hand in the heavenly places, in Him His people have their blessings secured. Nothing stimulates Christian courage like this certainty. Jehovah had sworn to the fathers to give the land to Israel; the knowledge of and faith in God's purpose, therefore, were the strength of Israel's energy; and God, in His purpose of grace, is the source of our strength and courage to go forward. The glory will be ours, for "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God.... Therefore we are always confident" (2 Cor. 5:5, 6). The foe will be overcome; "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8:31. Self is silent when faith views God's thoughts, and herein is strength. Christ is risen from the dead. He is in heaven, and in Him are our blessings. Therefore, fellow-Christian, let us go forward in this strength to enter practically upon our portion. "Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." 1 Cor. 16:13.

As to the second call to courage, we fall back upon God's thoughts as expressed in His Word, in order to act obediently to Him. The written Word opens to us the mind of God; there is the revelation of His gracious thoughts about His people, and there He records what He says is ours by grace. To obey that Word is a command from God. In believing what God says, when He tells us how He has blessed us, we practically lay hold of these blessings. The courage that flows from faith in God's Word makes the Christian soldier hardy and resolute. He pursues the path of obedience because he believes the Scriptures.

Practical blessing lies in obedience to the Word of God- yea, to all of His Word. Herein is the condition of blessing. First we believe that what God says is ours in Christ, is really ours; next, we lay hold of those blessings in the way He has enjoined us to lay hold of them. We can only go forward in the soul as we both know and obey His Word; and for this we need not only courage, but to be very courageous, for Satan will array himself against us immediately we put down our foot to tread the path of obedience to God.

Strength and courage to "observe to do" according to all the divine Word, are of vital importance. The giants who overcome God's people are not the enemies they encounter- for these are as nothing to God-the victorious giants are our own unbelief and disobedience.

We are called to obey God's Word as a whole-all His law -not our particularly prized portion of it. When the believer follows his favorite lines of truth, he is not strong and very courageous in obeying the whole of God's Word. Some believers have selected from God's Word certain portions for their obedience most congenial to them, and thus have practically constructed a revised Bible! All My Law is the divine exhortation.

A wise path will be a prosperous one, and the prosperous path is acting wisely on the straight line of obedience to the distinct instructions of the divine Word. No deviation is lawful-"Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left."

Now how shall intimate knowledge of the will of our God be obtained? The word of Scripture is to be ever in our mouth (Josh. 1:8). To depart from it is certain failure. We want Scripture for anything. "It is written" must decide all questions. When a difficulty arises, our first duty is to hearken to "Thus saith the Lord." A degenerate Christianity evades the plain truth of the divine Word, and substitutes for it the voice of human authority. The book of the law has departed out of the mouth, and, as a consequence, instead of prosperity, demoralization, confusion, and disorder exist among the soldiers.

Now, how shall the believer have his mouth filled with the words of his God? How shall he know what God says to him? By deep, painstaking, prayerful labor over it. The knowledge of even the letter of the Word is not gained at once. Continual feeding upon the Word is requisite; the whole soul needs to be taken up with it—"Thou shalt meditate therein day and night." By filling the affections with the words of the sacred volume, by loving labor over the Book of our God, by seeking the Holy Spirit's teaching, praying for the eyes of our heart's enlightenment, and for the spirit of revelation in the knowledge of God, the heart becomes so stored with its words, that we are able to observe to do according to all that is written therein. And thence flow spiritual prosperity and good success. The great aim of the child and servant of God should be acquaintance with, and obedience to, his God's mind.

"Thou shalt meditate" is a distinct call which should exercise the heart. Spiritually feeding upon the Word, we gain the desired heart knowledge. There is no hour more profitably spent than that in which the Christian is alone with God over His Word, humbly pondering upon God's thoughts in God's presence. A book-learned and a Spirit-taught Christian are very distinct. There may be a knowledge of the truth of the Word, obtained by reading or instruction, where "thou shalt meditate" is but scantily observed. There may be an intellectual grasp of the doctrines and principles of Scripture, and what then? "Knowledge puffeth up"! The Christian who has learned to enter in secret into God's presence as to knowledge, is necessarily humble and lowly in mind. We say necessarily so, because God's presence ever makes man humble.

Truly blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates therein day and night; "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Psalm 1:3. This beautiful figure is considered to be taken from the orange, which tree blossoms and bears fruit at one time, and is evergreen. The fragrance of Christ diffused from the believer; the sweetness of Christ waiting to be gathered from the believer; always the same Christ-like spirit; ever fresh, ever sustained by the living streams' of the hidden watercourses! Where such orange groves are found, how attractive they are! Let us seek for the sustaining nourishment of the water of the Word entering into our spiritual being, reaching into that which the eye sees not, even to our roots; for then shall there be profitable testimony for God. Dryness and fruitlessness arise from not being Spirit-fed.

Having meditated upon the Word, we are to observe to do according to all that is written therein, upon which course of action prosperity and success depend.

The third call for courage is because the Lord is with us (Josh. 1:9).

God's own command is our authority, His presence is our power. God, who gives the command, is with the soldier who obeys His command. The strength here enjoined is that of the hand for taking and holding, and that of the knee not to be overthrown. In the epistle to the Ephesians, we are exhorted to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.... For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (chap. 6:10-12), which are to the Christians what the hosts of Canaan were to Israel. Neither must there be rest in this warfare, but "having done all," or, as the margin reads, "having overcome all," we are called upon to stand.

Like sentinels at their posts, they must "stand" who hope to retain what they gain. It is ever easier to obtain than to maintain in the things of this life, and how distinctly is this the case in the things of God. Persistency in God's strength, and in courage, is required. Many a Christian who followed in the path of self-sacrifice to reach the knowledge of some truth of God, having obtained what he sought, has settled down into indifference and spiritual sloth. The Apostle Peter warns that, unless there be adding to what is obtained, we shall lose what we have (2 Pet. 1:5-10).

Finally come the words, "Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed." Fear is a bad symptom in the Christian. Fear indicates the presence of unbelief in God, or of some unjudged evil in ourselves. Not, indeed, that godly, loving fear- that reverence which dreads lest God should not be really obeyed, or His will should not be clearly apprehended-but that fear which quails before the enemy and hinders Christian warfare. Firm faith in God dispels dismay before enemies.

The principles set out in this stirring exhortation to Israel are of the utmost importance to ourselves in this our day. Therefore, may each of us know the grace and the power of the appeal.

Bethany: Part 1

We want the reader to turn with us to John 11 and 12. If we mistake not, he will find therein a very rare spiritual treat. In John 11 we see what the Lord Jesus was to the family of Bethany; and in John 12 we see what the family of Bethany was to Him. The entire passage is full of the most precious instruction.

In John 11 we have three great subjects presented to us; namely, first, our Lord's own path with the Father; second, His profound sympathy with His people; and, third, His grace in associating us with Himself in His work, in so far as that is possible.

"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying: Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

The sisters, in their time of trouble, turned to their divine Friend; and they were right. Jesus was a sure resource for them, as He is for all His tried ones wherever, however, or whoever they are. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Psa. 50:15). We make a most serious mistake when, in any time of need or pressure, we turn to the creature for help or sympathy. We are sure to be disappointed. Creature streams are dry. Creature props give way. Our God will make us prove the vanity and folly of all creature confidences, human hopes, and earthly expectations. And, on the other hand, He will prove to us, in the most touching and forcible manner, the truth and blessedness of His own word, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me" (Isa. 49:23).

No, never! He, blessed be His holy name, never fails a trusting heart. He cannot deny Himself. He delights to take occasion from our wants, woes, and weaknesses, to express and illustrate His tender care and loving-kindness in a thousand ways. But He will teach us the utter barrenness of all human resources. "Thus saith the LORD; 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 not inhabited" (Jer. 17:5-6).

Thus it must ever be. Disappointment, barrenness, and desolation are the sure and certain results of trusting in man. But, on the other hand — and mark the contrast, reader — "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).

Such is the unvarying teaching of Holy Scripture on both sides of this great practical question. It is a fatal mistake to look even to the very best of men — to betake ourselves, directly or indirectly, to

poor human cisterns. But the true secret of all blessedness, strength, and comfort is to look to Jesus — to betake ourselves at once in simple faith to the living God whose delight it ever is to help the needy, to strengthen the feeble, and lift up those that are cast down.

Hence then the sisters of Bethany did the right thing when, in the hour of need and pressure, they turned to Jesus. He was both able and willing to help them. But the blessed One did not at once respond to their call. He did not see fit at once to fly to their relief, much as He loved them. He fully entered into their sorrow and anxiety. He took it all in and measured it perfectly. He was thoroughly with them in it. There was no lack of sympathy, as we shall see in the sequel. Yet He paused; and the enemy might cast in all sorts of suggestions, and their own hearts might conceive all sorts of reasonings. It might seem as though “the Master” had forgotten them. Perhaps their loving Lord and Friend was changed toward them. Something may have occurred to bring a cloud between them. We all know how the poor heart reasons and tortures itself at such times. But there is a divine remedy for all the heart’s reasonings, and a triumphant answer to all the enemy’s dark and horrible suggestions. What is it? Unshaken confidence in the eternal stability of the love of Christ.

Christian reader, here lies the true secret of the whole matter. Let nothing shake your confidence in the unalterable love of your Lord. Come what may — let the furnace be ever so hot — let the waters be ever so deep — let the shadows be ever so dark — let the path be ever so rough — let the pressure be ever so great — still hold fast your confidence in the perfect love and sympathy of the One who has proved His love by going down into the dust of death — down under the dark and heavy billows and waves of the wrath of God, in order to save your soul from everlasting burnings. Be not afraid to trust Him fully — to commit yourself, without a shadow of reserve or misgiving, to Him. Do not measure His love by your circumstances. If you do, you must of necessity reach a false conclusion. Judge not according to the outward appearance. Never reason from your surroundings. Get to the heart of Christ, and reason out from that blessed center. Never interpret His love by your circumstances, but always interpret your circumstances by His love. Let the beams of His everlasting favor shine upon your darkest surroundings, and then you will be able to answer every infidel thought, no matter whence it comes.

It is a grand thing to be able, come what may, to vindicate God, to stand, even if we can do nothing more, as a monument of His unfailing faithfulness to all who put their trust in Him. What though the horizon around be dark and depressing — though the heavy clouds gather and the storm rage — God is faithful and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it.

Besides, we must not measure divine love by the mode of its manifestation. We are all prone to do so, but it is a great mistake. The love of God clothes itself in varied forms, and not unfrequently the form seems to us, in our shallowness and shortsightedness, mysterious and incomprehensible. But, if only we wait patiently and in artless confidence, divine light will shine upon the dispensation of divine providence, and our hearts shall be filled with wonder, love, and praise.

“We leave it to Himself,

To choose and to command;

With wonder filled, we soon shall see

How wise, how strong, His hand.

“We comprehend Him not;

Yet earth and heaven tell,

God sits as Sovereign on the throne

And ruleth all things well.”

God's thoughts are not as our thoughts; nor His ways as our ways; nor His love as our love. If we hear of a friend in distress or difficulty of any kind, our first impulse is to fly to his help and relieve him of his pressure if possible. But this might be a very great mistake. In place of rendering help, it might be doing serious mischief. We might actually be running athwart the purpose of God; and taking our friend out of a position in which divine government had placed him for his ultimate and permanent profit. The love of God is a wise and faithful love. It abounds toward us in all wisdom and prudence. We, on the contrary, make the gravest mistakes, even when most sincerely desiring to do what is right and good. We are not competent to take in all the bearings of things, or scan the windings and workings of providence, or weigh the ultimate results of the divine dealings. Hence, the urgent need of waiting much on God; and, above all things, of holding fast our confidence in His unchanging, unfailing, unerring love. He will make all plain. He will bring light out of darkness, life out of death, victory out of seeming defeat. He will cause the deepest and darkest distress to yield the very richest harvest of blessing. He will make all things work together for good. But He is never in a hurry. He has His own wise ends in view, and He will reach them in His own time and way; and, moreover, out of what may seem to us to be a dark, tangled, inexplicable maze of providence, light will spring forth and fill our souls with praise and adoration.

The foregoing line of thought may help us to understand and appreciate our Lord's bearing toward the sisters in Bethany, on hearing of their trouble. He felt there was much more involved in the case than the mere matter of relieving those whom He, nevertheless, deeply loved. The glory of God had to be considered. Hence, He says, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” He saw in this case an occasion for the display of the divine glory, and not merely for the exhibition of personal affection, however deep and real that might be — and with Him, blessed be His name, it was both deep and real, for we read, “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”

But, in the judgment of our blessed and adorable Lord, the glory of God took precedence of every other consideration. Neither personal affection nor personal fear had the smallest sway over His movements. He was ruled, in all things, by the glory of God. From the manger to the cross, in life and in death, in all His words and all His works and all His ways, His devoted heart was set with firm and unalterable purpose upon the glory of God. Hence, though it might be a good thing to relieve a friend in distress, it was far better and higher to glorify God; and we may rest assured, that the beloved family of Bethany sustained no loss by a delay which only made room for the brighter shining out of the divine glory.

Let us all remember this in seasons of trial and pressure. It is an all-important point and, when fully apprehended, will prove a very deep and blessed source of consolation. It will help us marvelously to bear up under sickness, pain, death, bereavement, sorrow, and poverty. How blessed to be able

to stand beside the sickbed of a friend and say, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God"! And this is faith's privilege. Yes, the true believer can stand, not only in the sick chamber, but by the open grave, and see the beams of the divine glory shining forth over all.

No doubt the skeptic might cavil at the statement that, "This sickness is not unto death." He might object and reason and argue on the ground of the apparent fact that Lazarus did die. But faith never reasons from appearances. It brings God in and there finds a divine solution for all difficulties. Such is the moral elevation — such the reality of a life of faith. It sees God above and beyond all circumstances. It reasons from God downward, and never from circumstances upward. Sickness and death are nothing in the presence of divine power. All difficulties disappear from the pathway of faith. They are, as Joshua and Caleb assured their unbelieving brethren, simply bread for the true believer.

Nor is this all. Faith can wait God's time, knowing that His time is the best. It staggers not, even though He may seem to linger. It rests with the most perfect calmness in the assurance of His unchanging love and unerring wisdom. It fills the heart with the sweetest confidence, that if there be delay — if the relief be not sent all at once — it is all for the best, inasmuch as all things work together for good, and all must in the long run redound to the glory of God. Faith enables its happy possessor to vindicate God amid the most intense pressure, and to know and confess that divine love always does the very best for its object.

Bethany: Part 2 and 3

It gives great rest to the heart to know that the One who has undertaken for us, in all our weakness, in all our need, and in all the exigencies of our path, from first to last, has first of all perfectly secured, in every respect, the glory of God. That was His primary object in all things. In the grand work of redemption, and in all the most minute details of our history, from the starting point to the goal, the glory of God has the first place in the devoted heart of that blessed One with whom we have to do. At all cost to Himself He vindicated and maintained the divine glory. For that end He gave up everything. He laid aside His own glory, humbled Himself, and emptied Himself. He surrendered all His personal rights and claims, and yielded up His life, in order to lay the imperishable foundation of that glory which now fills all heaven — shall soon cover the earth, and shine through the wide universe forever.

The knowledge and abiding sense of this must give profound repose to the spirit in reference to everything that concerns us, whether it be the salvation of the soul, the forgiveness of sins, or the need of the daily path. All that could possibly be a matter of exercise to us, for time or for eternity, has been provided for, all secured on the selfsame basis that sustains the divine glory. We are saved and provided for; but the salvation and provision, all praise to our glorious Saviour and Provider, are inseparably bound up with the glory of God. In all that our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, in all that He is doing, in all that He will do, the glory of God is fully maintained.

And, further, we may add, in all our trials, difficulties, sorrows, and exercises, if instant relief be not afforded, we have to remember that there is some deep reason connected with the glory of God and our real good, why the desired relief is withheld. In seasons of pressure we are apt to think only of the one thing; namely, relief. But there is very much more than this to be considered. We should think of the glory of God. We should seek to know His object in putting us under the pressure. We should earnestly desire that His end might be gained, and His glory promoted. This would be for our fullest and deepest blessing, while, on the contrary, the relief which we so eagerly desire would be the very worst thing we could get. We must always remember that through the marvelous grace of God His glory and our true blessing are so inseparably bound up together, that when the former is maintained, the latter must be perfectly secured.

This is a most precious consideration, and one eminently calculated to sustain the heart in all seasons of affliction. All things must ultimately redound to the glory of God, and "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." It may not, perhaps, be so easy to see this when the pressure is upon us. When anxiously watching by the sickbed of a beloved friend; or when treading the chamber of sorrow; or when laid on a bed of pain and languishing ourselves; or when overwhelmed by sudden tidings of the loss of our earthly all; under such circumstances it may not be so easy to see the glory of God maintained, and our blessing secured; but faith can see it for all that; and as for "blind unbelief," it is always "sure to err." If those beloved sisters of Bethany had judged by the sight of their eyes, they would have been sorely tried during those weary days and nights spent at the bedside of their much

loved brother. And not only so, but when the terrible moment arrived, and they were called to witness the closing scene, many dark reasonings might have sprung up in their crushed and desolate hearts.

But Jesus was looking on. His heart was with them. He was watching the whole process, and that too from the very highest standpoint — the glory of God. He took in the entire scene, in all its bearings, in all its influences, in all its issues. He felt for those afflicted sisters — felt with them — felt as only a perfect human heart could feel. Though absent in person, He was with them in spirit as they waded through the deep waters. His loving heart perfectly entered into all their sorrow, and He only waited for God's due time to come to their aid and light up the darkness of death and the grave with the bright beams of resurrection glory. "When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Things were allowed to take their course, as we say; death was allowed to enter the much loved dwelling; but all this was for the glory of God. The enemy might seem to have it all his own way, but it was only in appearance; in reality, death itself was but preparing a platform on which the glory of God was to be displayed. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

Such then was the path of our blessed Lord — His path with the Father. His every movement, His every step, His every act, His every utterance, His every thought had direct reference to the claims of the Father's glory. Much as He loved the family of Bethany, His personal affection led Him not into the scene of their sorrow till the moment was come for the display of the divine glory; and then no personal fear could keep Him away. "Then after that saith He to His disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee; and goest Thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."

Thus that blessed One walked in the full blaze of the glory of God. His springs of action were all divine — all heavenly. He was a perfect stranger to all the motives and objects of the men of this world, who are stumbling along in the thick moral darkness that enwraps them, whose motives are all selfish, whose objects are earthly and sensual. He never did a single thing to please Himself. His Father's will, His Father's glory, ruled Him in all things. The stirrings of deep personal affection took Him not to Bethany, and no personal fear could keep Him away. In all He did, and in all He did not do, He found His motive in the glory of God.

Precious Saviour! teach us to walk in Thy heavenly footsteps! Give us to drink more into Thy Spirit! This, truly, is what we need. We are so sadly prone to self-seeking and self-pleasing, even when apparently doing right things, and ostensibly engaging in the Lord's work. We run hither and thither, do this and that, travel, and preach, and write; and all the while we may be pleasing ourselves, and not really seeking to do the will of God, and promote His glory. May we study more profoundly our divine Exemplar! May He be ever before our hearts as the One to whom we are predestinated to be conformed. Thank God for the sweet and soul sustaining assurance that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. It is but a little while, and we shall be done forever with all that now hinders our progress and interrupts our communion. Till then, may the blessed Spirit work in our hearts, and keep us so occupied with Christ, so feeding by faith on His

preciousness, that our practical ways may be a more living expression of Himself, and that we may bring forth more abundantly the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Part 3

We may now meditate for a few moments on the deeply interesting theme of Christ's sympathy with His people, so touchingly illustrated in His dealings with the beloved family of Bethany. He allowed them to go through the exercise, to wade through the deep waters, to be thoroughly tested, in order that the "trial" of their "faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory." Looked at from nature's standpoint, it might seem as though all hope was gone, and every ray of light faded away from the horizon. Lazarus was dead and buried. All was over. And yet the Lord had said, "This sickness is not unto death." How was this? What could He mean?

Thus nature might reason; but we must not listen to the reasonings of nature, which are sure to carry us down into the regions of the shadow of death. We must listen to the voice of Jesus; we must hearken to His living, cheering, strengthening, encouraging accents. In this way we shall be able to vindicate and glorify God, not only at the sickbed, and in the chamber of death, but at the very grave itself. Death is not death if Christ be there. The grave itself is but the sphere in which the glory of God shines out in all its luster. It is when all that belongs to the creature is gone from the scene — when the platform is thoroughly cleared of all that is merely of man — it is then, and not until then, that the beams of the divine glory can be seen in all their brightness. It is when all is gone, or seems to be, that Christ can come in and fill the scene.

This is a grand point for the soul to get hold of and understand. It is only faith that can really enter into it. We are all so terribly prone to lean on some creature prop, to sit beside some creature stream, to trust in an arm of flesh, to cling to what we can see, to rest in the palpable and tangible. "The things that are seen" are "temporal" have oftentimes more weight with us than "the things which are unseen" and "eternal." Hence it is that our ever faithful Lord sees it right and good to sweep away our creature props, and dry up our creature streams, in order that we may lean on Himself, the eternal Rock of our salvation, and find all our springs in Himself, the living and exhaustless Fountain of all blessing. He is jealous of our love and confidence, and He will clear the scene of everything that might divide our hearts with Himself. He knows it is for our soul's full blessing to be wholly cast upon Himself, and hence He seeks to purify our hearts from every hateful idol.

And should we not praise Him for all this? Yes, truly; and not only so, but we should welcome whatever means He is pleased to use for the accomplishment of His wise and gracious end, even though, to nature's view, it may seem harsh and severe. He may often have to say to us, as He said to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

Yes, beloved reader, by-and-by we shall know and appreciate all His dealings. We shall look back upon the whole course, from the light of His own blessed presence, and see and own that the very heaviest stroke of His hand was the very strongest expression of His love at the time. Martha and Mary might wonder why death had been allowed to enter their dwelling. Doubtless they looked, day after day, hour after hour, moment after moment, for their beloved Friend to enter; but instead of that He kept away, and death entered, and all seemed gone.

Why was this? Let Himself reply. "These things said He: and after that He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." What touching affection! What gracious intimacy! What a tender linking of Himself with the family of Bethany, on the one hand, and His disciples on the other! "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." It was but a gentle sleep. Death is not death in the presence of the Prince of life. The grave is but a sleeping place. "I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." Such words could not have been uttered had Lazarus been raised from a sickbed. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity"; and we can see without difficulty that the grave afforded God a far better opportunity than a sickbed.

This then was the reason why Jesus kept away from His beloved friends. He waited for the fitting moment, and that moment was when Lazarus had lain in the grave four days already, when every human hope had vanished; when all human agency was powerless and valueless. "I go" — not to raise him from a sickbed, but "that I may awake him out of sleep." The platform was cleared of the creature, in order that the glory of God might shine out in all its brightness.

And is it not well to have the scene thus cleared of the creature? Is it not a mercy — not in disguise, as some people say, but — a plain, positive, palpable mercy — to have every human prop gone, every human hope vanished? Faith says, Yes — says it unhesitatingly and emphatically. Nature says, No! The poor heart craves something of the creature, something that the eye can see. But faith — that most precious, priceless, divinely-wrought principle — positively delights in being called to lean absolutely and abidingly upon the living God.

But it must be a real thing. It is of little use talking about faith if the heart be a stranger to its power. Mere profession is perfectly worthless. God deals in moral realities. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith?" He does not say, "What doth it profit though a man have faith?" Blessed be God, those who, through grace, have it, know that it profits much every way. It glorifies God as nothing else can do. It lifts the soul above the depressing influences of things seen and temporal. It tranquilizes the spirit in a most blessed manner. It enlarges the heart, by leading us out of our own narrow circle of personal interests, sympathies, cares, and burdens, and connecting us livingly with the eternal, exhaustless spring of goodness. It works by love, and draws us out in gracious activity toward every object of need, but especially toward those who are of the household of faith.

It is faith alone that can move along the path where Jesus leads. To mere nature that path is dreadful. It is rough, dark, and lonely. Even those who surrounded our blessed Lord on the occasion of the death of Lazarus seemed wholly unable to comprehend His thoughts, or follow intelligently His footsteps. When He said, "Let us go into Judea again," they could think only of the Jews stoning Him. When He said, "I go, that I may awake him out of sleep," they replied, "If he sleep, he shall do well." When He spake of his death, they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. When He said "unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe"; poor, unbelieving nature, speaking through the lips of Thomas Didymus said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

In a word, we see total inability to take in the true bearing of the case, as viewed from a divine standpoint. Nature sees nothing but death and darkness, where faith basks in the sunlight of the divine presence. "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." Alas! alas! was this all that even a disciple had to say? How absurd are the conclusions of unbelief! Let us go with the Prince of life,

that — what? — “we may die with Him.” What folly! What a gross contradiction! What should Thomas have said? “Let us go, that we may behold His glory; that we may see His marvelous doings in the very region of the shadow of death; that we may share in His triumphs; that we may shout, at the very gates of the grave, our hallelujahs to His deathless name!”

Bethany: Part 4 and 5

We have already noticed the three prominent subjects presented to us in John 11; namely, our Lord's own path with the Father; second, His profound sympathy with us; third, His grace in linking us with Himself, in so far as that is possible, in all His blessed work. He ever walked with God, in calm, unbroken communion. He walked in the most implicit obedience to the will of God, and was ruled in all things by His glory. He walked in the day, and stumbled not. The will of God was the light in which the perfect workman ever carried on His work. He found His only motive for action in the divine will—His only object in the divine glory. He came down from heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father; and in doing that will, He ever found His meat and drink.

But His large, loving heart flowed out in perfect sympathy with human sorrow. This we see attested in the most striking manner as He moved, in company with the afflicted sisters, to the tomb of their brother. If any question had arisen in their hearts during the season of trial, in the absence of their Lord, it was abundantly answered; yea, we may add, completely demolished, by the manifestation of His deep and tender affection as He moved toward the spot where the beams of the divine glory were so soon to shine out over the dreary region of death.

We do not here dwell upon the interesting interview between the two sisters and their beloved Lord, so full of teaching—so illustrative of His perfect mode of dealing with His people in their varied measures of intelligence and communion. We pass at once to the inspired statement in verse 33 of our chapter. "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept."

How wonderful! The Son of God groaned and wept. Let us never forget. He, though God over all, blessed forever; though the resurrection and the Life; though the Quickener of the dead; though the Conqueror of the grave; though on His way to deliver the body of His friend from the grasp of the enemy—sample of what He will soon do for all who belong to Him—yet, so perfectly did He enter into human sorrow, so completely did He take in all the terrible consequences of sin, all the misery and all the desolation of this sin-stricken world, all the dreadful pressure of the enemy's power upon the human family—so thoroughly did the blessed One take in each and all of these things, that He groaned and wept—and those tears and groans emanated from the depths of a perfect human heart that felt as only a perfect human heart could feel—felt according to God—for every form of human sorrow and misery. Though perfectly exempt in His own divine Person from sin and all its consequences, yea, because exempt, He could in perfect grace enter into it all, and make His own of it, as only He could do.

"Jesus wept"! Wondrous, significant, suggestive fact! He wept, not for Himself, but for others. He wept with them. Mary wept. The Jews wept. All this is easily grasped and understood. But that Jesus should weep reveals a mystery which no created intelligence can ever fathom. It was divine compassion weeping through human eyes over the desolation which sin had caused in this poor world, weeping in sympathy with those whose hearts had been crushed by the rude hand of death.

Let all who are in sorrow remember this. Jesus is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. His circumstances are changed, but His heart is not. His position is different, but His sympathy is the same. "We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). There is a perfect human heart on the throne of the Majesty of the heavens, and that heart sympathizes with us in all our sorrows, in all our trials, in all our infirmities, in all our pressure and exercise. He perfectly enters into it all. Yea, He gives Himself to each one of His beloved members here upon earth, as though He had only that one to look after.

How sweet and soothing to think of this! It is worth having a sorrow to be allowed to taste the preciousness of Christ's sympathy. The sisters of Bethany might say, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But if their brother had not died, they would not have seen Jesus weeping, or heard His deep groan of sympathy with them in their sorrow. And who would not say that it is better to have the sympathy of His heart with us in our sorrow, than the power of His hand in keeping or taking us out of it? Was it not much better, much higher, much more blessed, for the three witnesses in Daniel 3 to have the Son of God walking with them in the furnace, than to have escaped the furnace by the power of His hand? Unquestionably.

And thus it is in every case. We have ever to remember that this is not the day of Christ's power. By-and-by He will take to Himself His great power, and reign. Then all our sufferings, all our trials, all our tribulations, will be over forever. The night of weeping will give place to the morning of joy, the morning without clouds, the morning that shall never know an evening. But now it is the time of Christ's patience, the time of His precious sympathy; and the sense of this is most blessedly calculated to sustain the heart in passing through the deep waters of affliction.

And there are the deep waters of affliction. There are trials, sorrows, tribulations, and difficulties. And not only so, but our God means that we should feel them. His hand is in them for our real good, and for His glory. True, it is our privilege to be able to say, "We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:3-5).

The Lord be praised for all this! But it is folly to deny that there are trials, sorrows, and tribulations of all sorts. Nor would our God have us insensible to them. Insensibility to them is folly; glorying in them is faith. The consciousness of Christ's sympathy, and the intelligence of God's object in all our afflictions, will enable us to rejoice in them; but to deny that there are afflictions, or that we ought to feel them, is simply absurd. God would not have us to be stoics; He leads us into deep waters, but He walks with us through them; and when His end is reached, He delivers us out of them, to our joy and His own everlasting praise.

"He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12:9-10). At the first, Paul longed to be rid of the thorn in the flesh, whatever it was. He besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him. But the thorn in the flesh was better than pride in the heart. It was better far to be afflicted than puffed up—better to have Christ's sympathy with him in his temptation than the

power of His hand in delivering him out of it.

PART 5

It is deeply touching to mark the two groans of our Lord as He moved toward the tomb of His friend. The first groan was called forth by the sight of the weeping mourners around Him. "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." The margin reads, "He troubled Himself."

How precious is the thought of this to the crushed and sorrowing heart! The sight of human tears drew forth a groan from the loving, sympathizing, tender heart of the Son of God. Let all mourners remember this. Jesus did not rebuke Mary for weeping. He did not rally her on account of her sorrow. He did not tell her she ought not to feel — that she ought to be above everything of the sort. Ah! no; this would not be like Him. Some of us heartless folk talk in this style, but He knew better. He, though Son of God, was a real man; and hence, He felt as a man ought to feel; and He knew what man must feel while passing through this dark vale of tears. Some of us talk largely and loftily about being above nature, and not feeling the snapping of tender links, and much in that strain. But in this we are not wise. We are not in sympathy with the heart of the Man Christ Jesus. It is one thing to put forth, in heartless flippancy, our transcendental theories, and it is quite another to pass through the deep waters of grief and desolation with a heart exercised according to God. It will generally be found that those of us who declaim the loudest against nature, prove ourselves to be just like other people, when called to meet bodily sickness, sorrow of heart, mental pressure, or pecuniary loss. The great point is to be real, and to go through the stern realities of actual life with a heart truly subject to God. Fine-drawn theories will not stand the test of real sorrow, trial, and difficulty; and nothing can be more absurd than to talk to people, with human hearts, about not feeling things. God means us to feel, and — precious, soothing, consolatory thought! — Jesus feels with us.

Let all the sons and daughters of sorrow remember these things for the consolation of their sorrowing hearts. "God... comforteth those that are cast down." If we were never cast down, we should not know His precious ministry. A stoic does not need the comfort of God. It is worth having a broken heart to have it bound up by our most merciful High Priest.

"Jesus groaned"—"Jesus wept." What power, what divine sweetness in these words! What a blank there would be were these words erased from the page of inspiration! Surely we could not do without them, and therefore our own most gracious God has, by His Spirit, penned these unspeakably precious words for the comfort and consolation of all who are called to tread the chamber of sorrow, or to stand at the grave of a friend.

But there was another groan evoked from the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of the Jews, when they heard His groan and saw His tears, could not help exclaiming, "Behold how He loved him!" But alas! others only found, in such affecting proofs of true and profound sympathy, occasion for the display of heartless skepticism—and skepticism is always perfectly heartless—"Some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Here the poor human heart lets itself out in its ignorant reasonings. How little did these skeptics understand either the Person or the path of the Son of God! How could they appreciate the

motives that actuated Him either in what He did, or in what He did not do? He opened the eyes of the blind, in order that “the works of God should be made manifest in him.” And He did not prevent the death of Lazarus, that God might be glorified thereby.

But what did they know about all this? Absolutely nothing. The blessed One moved at far too high an elevation to be within the ken of worldly religionists and skeptical reasoners. “The world knew Him not.” God understood and appreciated Him perfectly. This was enough. What were the thoughts of men to One who ever walked in calm communion with the Father? They were utterly incapable of forming a correct judgment, either of Himself or of His ways. They carried on their reasonings in that thick moral darkness in which they lived and moved and had their being.

Thus it is still. Human reasonings are begun, continued, and ended in the dark. Man reasons about God; reasons about Christ; reasons about Scripture; reasons about heaven, about hell, about eternity; about all sorts of things. But all his reasonings are worse—far worse—than worthless. Men are no more capable of understanding or appreciating the written Word now, than they were of understanding or appreciating the living Word when He was among them. Indeed, the two things must go together. As the living Word and the written Word are one, so to know the one we must know the other; but the natural, the unrenewed, the unconverted man knows neither. He is totally blind, in utter darkness, dead; and when he makes a religious profession, he is “twice dead” — dead in nature and dead in his religion. What are his thoughts, his reasonings, his conclusions worth? Nothing! they are perfectly baseless, totally false, thoroughly ruinous.

Nor is there the slightest use in arguing with unconverted people. It only tends to deceive them by leading them to suppose that they can argue. It is always the best way to deal solemnly with them as to their own moral condition before God. We do not find our Lord taking any notice of the unbelieving reasonings of those around Him. He simply heaves another groan and goes on His way. “Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.”

This second groan is deeply affecting. He groaned at first in sympathy with the mourners around Him. He groaned again over the hardness and dark unbelief of the human heart, and of the heart of Israel in particular. But, be it carefully noted, He does not attempt to explain His reasons for not having hindered the death of His friend, although He had opened the eyes of the blind.

Blessed, perfect Servant! It was no part of His business to explain or apologize. He had to work on in the current of the divine counsels, and for the promotion of the divine glory. He had to do the Father’s will, not explain Himself to those who could not possibly understand the explanation.

This is a most weighty point for us all. Some of us lose a quantity of time in argument, apology, and explanation, in cases where such things are not the least understood. We really do mischief. Better far pursue in holy calmness of spirit, singleness of eye, and decision of purpose, the path of duty. That is what we have got to do, not to explain or defend ourselves, which is sorry work at best for any one.

But we must pass for a moment to the tomb of Lazarus, and there see with what lovely grace our adorable Lord and Master sought to associate His servants with Himself in His work, in so far as that was possible; though, even here too, He is sadly intruded upon by the dark unbelief of the human heart. “Jesus said, Take ye away the stone.” This they could do, and hence He most

graciously calls upon them to do it. It was all they could do, so far. But here unbelief breaks in and casts its dark shadows over the heart. "Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days."

And what of that? Could the humiliating process of decomposition, even if completed, stand for one moment in the way of Him who is the resurrection and the life? Impossible! Bring Him in, and all is clear and simple; leave Him out, and all is dark and impracticable. Let but the voice of the Son of God be heard, and death and corruption must vanish like the darkness of night before the beams of the rising sun. "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying, that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:51-57).

How magnificent! What are death, the grave, and decomposition in the presence of such power as this? Talk of being dead four days as a difficulty! Millions that have been moldering in the dust for thousands of years, shall spring up in a moment into life, immortality, and eternal glory at the voice of that blessed One to whom Martha ventured to offer her unbelieving and irrational suggestion.

Bethany: Part 6

In our Lord's reply to Martha we have one of the very finest utterances that ever fell on the human ear. "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" What living depth, what divine power, what freshness, sweetness, and comfort in these words! They present to us the very gist and marrow, the heart's core, the essential principle of the divine life. It is only the eye of faith that can see the glory of God. Unbelief sees only difficulties, darkness, and death. Faith looks above and beyond all these, and ever basks in the blessed beams of the divine glory. Poor Martha saw nothing but a decomposed human body, simply because she was governed by a spirit of dark and depressing unbelief. Had she been swayed by an artless faith, she would have walked to the tomb in company with Him who is the resurrection and the life, assured that, instead of death and decomposition, she should see the glory of God.

Reader, this is a grand principle for the soul to get a thorough grasp of. It is utterly impossible for human language to overstate its value and importance. Faith never looks at difficulties, except indeed it be to feed on them. It looks not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen. It endures as seeing Him who is invisible. It takes hold of the living God. It leans on His arm; it makes use of His strength; it draws on His exhaustless treasury; it walks in the light of His blessed countenance, and sees His glory shining forth over the darkest scenes of human life.

The inspired volume abounds in striking illustrations of the contrast between faith and unbelief. Let us glance at one or two of them. Look, for example, at Caleb and Joshua, in contrast with their unbelieving brethren, in Numbers 13. These latter saw only the difficulties which stood in their way. "Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land"—not stronger than Jehovah, surely—"and the cities are walled, and very great"—not greater than the living God—"and moreover we saw the children of Anak there." It is very clear that they did not see the glory of God; indeed they saw anything and everything but that. They were wholly governed by a spirit of unbelief, and hence they could only bring "up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature"—they did not see a single small man, not one trifling difficulty; they looked at everything through the magnifying glass of unbelief. "There we saw the giants"—no doubt! — "the sons of Anak, which come of the giants." And nothing more? Nothing whatever. God was shut out; they could not see Him at all through the glasses they used. They could only see the terrible giants and towering walls. "And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

But what of Jehovah? Alas, He was shut out! Unbelief invariably leaves God out of its calculations. It can take a very accurate account of all the difficulties, all the hindrances, all the hostile influences; but as for the living God, it sees Him not. There is a melancholy consistency in the utterances of unbelief, whether we listen to them in the wilderness of Kadesh, or, fourteen hundred years afterward, at the tomb of Lazarus. Unbelief is always and everywhere the same; it begins, continues, and ends with the absolute and complete exclusion of the one living and true God. It

can do naught save to cast dark shadows over the pathway of everyone who will listen to its voice.

How different are the accents of faith! Harken to Joshua and Caleb, as they seek to stem the rising tide of unbelief. "And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: and they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us" — here lies the secret — "then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us" — faith actually feeds on the difficulties which terrify unbelief — "their defense is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not."

Glorious words! It does the heart good to transcribe them. "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Thus it is always. If there is a melancholy consistency in the utterances of unbelief, there is a glorious consistency in the accents of faith, wherever we harken to them. Caleb and Joshua saw the glory of God, and in the light of that glory, what were giants and high walls? Simply nothing. If anything, they were bread for the nourishment of faith. Faith brings in God, and He shuts out all difficulties. What walls or giants could stand before the Almighty God? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Such is ever the artless, but powerful, reasoning of faith. It conducts all its arguments, and reaches all its conclusions, in the blessed light of the divine presence. It sees the glory of God. It looks above and beyond the heavy clouds which at times gather upon the horizon, and finds in God its sure and never failing resource. Precious faith! The only thing in the world that really glorifies God; the only thing that makes the heart of the Christian truly bright and happy.

Let us take another illustration. Turn to 1 Kings 17:12 and contrast the widow of Sarepta with Elijah the Tishbite. What was the difference between them? Just the difference that ever exists between unbelief and faith. Listen again to the utterances of unbelief. "And she said, as the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

Here, truly, is a gloomy picture. An empty barrel, an exhausted cruse, and death! Was that all? That was all for blind unbelief. It is the old story of the giants and lofty walls over again. God is shut out, though she could say, "As the LORD thy God liveth." In reality she had no real sense of His presence, and of His all-sufficiency to meet her need and that of her house. Her circumstances excluded God from the vision of her soul. She looked at things that were seen, not at the things which were unseen. She saw not the invisible One; she saw nothing but famine and death. As the ten unbelieving spies saw nothing but the difficulties; as Martha saw nothing but the grave and its humiliating results; so the poor Sareptan saw nothing but starvation and death.

Not so the man of faith. He looked beyond the barrel and the cruse. He had no thought of dying of hunger. He rested on the word of the Lord. Here was his precious resource. God had said, "I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." This was quite enough for him. He knew that God could turn the very barrel itself into meal, and the cruse into oil, to sustain him, if necessary. Like Caleb and Joshua, he brought God into the scene, and found in Him the true solution of every difficulty. They saw God above and beyond the walls and the giants. They rested on His eternal

word. He had promised to bring His people into the land; and hence, though there were nothing but walls and giants from Dan to Beer-sheba, He would most surely fulfill His word.

And so with Elijah the Tishbite. He saw the living and almighty God above and beyond the barrel and the cruse. He rested upon that word which is settled forever in heaven, and which never can fail a trusting heart. This tranquilized his spirit, and with this he sought to tranquilize the widow too. "And Elijah said unto her, Fear not" — precious, soul stirring, utterance of faith! — "Go and do as thou hast said.... For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth."

Here was the solid ground on which the man of God rested when he ventured to offer a word of encouragement to the poor desponding widow of Sarepta. It was not in the lightheartedness or blind recklessness of nature that he spoke to her. He did not attempt to deny that the barrel and cruse were almost empty, as the woman had said. This could have given her no comfort, inasmuch as she knew too well the facts of her case. But he brought the living God and His faithful word before her aching heart; and hence he could say, "Fear not." He sought to lead her soul to that true resting place where he himself had found repose; namely, the word of God—blessed, unfailing, divine resting place for every anxious soul!

Thus it was with Caleb and Joshua. They did not attempt to deny that there were giants and high walls. That would have been of no possible use. But they brought God in, and sought to place Him between the hearts of their desponding brethren and the dreaded difficulties. This is what faith always does, and thus gives glory to God, and keeps the soul in perfect peace, let the difficulties be ever so great. It is the height of folly to deny that there are obstacles and hostile influences in the way. There is a certain style of speaking of such things which cannot possibly minister comfort or encouragement to a poor troubled heart. Faith accurately weighs the difficulties and trials, but knows that the power of God outweighs them all, and rests in holy calmness on His word, and in His perfect wisdom and everlasting love.

The reader's mind will no doubt recur to many other instances in which the Lord's people have been cast down by looking at circumstances, instead of looking to God. David, in a dark moment, could say, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." What a sad mistake!—the mistake of unbelief. What should he have said?—denied that the hand of Saul was against him? Surely not; what comfort could that have given him, inasmuch as he knew too well that it was really so? But he should have remembered that the hand of God was with him, and that hand was stronger than ten thousand Sauls.

So with Jacob, in his day of darkness and despair. "All these things," said he, "are against me." What should he have added? "But God is for me." Faith has its buts and ifs as well as unbelief; but faith's buts and ifs are all bright, because they express the passage of the soul—its rapid passage—from the difficulties to God Himself. "But God who is rich." And again, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Thus faith ever reasons. It begins with God; it places Him between the soul and all its surroundings, and thus imparts a peace which passeth all understanding, a peace which nothing can disturb.

But we must, before closing this paper, return for a moment to the tomb of Lazarus. The rapid glance we have taken through the inspired volume will enable us to appreciate more fully those

most precious words of our Lord to Martha, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Men tell us that seeing is believing, but we can say that believing is seeing. Yes, reader, get hold of this grand truth. It will carry you through and bear you above the darkest and most trying scenes of this dark and trying world. "Have faith in God." This is the mainspring of the divine life. "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Faith knows and is persuaded that there is nothing too hard, nothing too great, and nothing too small for God. It can count on Him for everything. It basks in the very sunlight of His presence, and exults in the manifestation of His goodness, His faithfulness, and His power. It ever delights to see the platform cleared of the creature that the glory of God may shine forth in all its luster. It turns away from all creature streams and creature props, and finds all its resources in the one living and true God.

Only see how the divine glory displays itself at the grave of Lazarus, even in spite of the unbelieving suggestion of Martha's heart; for God, blessed be His name, delights at times to rebuke our fears, as well as to answer our faith. "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which standby I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."

Glorious scene! displaying our Jesus as the Son of God, with power, by resurrection of the dead. Gracious scene! in which the Son of God condescends to use man in rolling away the stone and removing the grave clothes. How good of Him to use us in any little way! May it be our joy to be ever ready! May His grace in using us produce in us a holy readiness to be used, that God in all things may be glorified!

Bethany: Part 7

The opening paragraph of John 12 brings before us a scene of deepest interest, and full of most precious instruction. We feel we cannot do better than quote at full length the lovely record, for the spiritual benefit of the reader. There is nothing, after all, like the veritable language of holy Scripture.

“Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.”

Here we have illustrated in the most striking and forcible manner the three grand features which ought to characterize every Christian and every Christian assembly; namely, calm, intelligent communion, as seen in Lazarus seated at the table; holy worship, as seen in Mary at the feet of her Lord; and loving service, as seen in Martha, in her activities about the house. All three go to make up the Christian character, and all three should be exhibited in every Christian assembly. We consider it a very great moral mistake to set any one of these features in opposition to the others, inasmuch as each, in its proper place, is lovely; and, we may add, each should find its place in all. We should all of us know what it is to sit at table with our blessed Lord in sweet communion. This will most assuredly lead to profound homage and adoration; and we may rest assured that, where there is the communion and the worship, there will not be lacking the loving activities of true service.

The reader will observe that in the above beautiful scene there is no record of any collision between Martha and Mary. Each had her place to fill. There was room for both. “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister.” Here Martha is put first. In verse 1 we read of “Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.” Looked at from a divine standpoint, there is no need why anyone should in the smallest degree collide with another. And further, we may add, there is no necessity whatever for comparing the sphere of one with that of another. If Christ be our one absorbing Object, there will be lovely harmony in action, though our line of things may vary.

Thus it was at Bethany. Lazarus was at the table, Mary at the Master's feet, and Martha was about the house. All was in beautiful order, because Christ was the Object of each. Lazarus would have been entirely out of his place had he set about preparing the supper; and if Martha had sat at the table, there would have been no supper prepared. But both were in their right places, and we may rest assured that both would rejoice in the odor of Mary's ointment as she poured it on the feet of their ever loving and beloved Lord.

Is not all this conveyed to us in that one sentence, “There they made Him a supper”? It was not one more than another. All had part in the precious privilege of making a supper for the one peerless Object of their heart's affections; and, having Him in their midst, each fell naturally,

simply, and effectively into his and her proper place. Provided the beloved Master's heart was refreshed, it mattered not who did this or who did that. Christ was the Center and each moved around Him.

Thus it should always be in the assembly of Christians; and thus it would be, if odious self were judged and set aside, and each heart simply occupied with Christ Himself. But, alas! here is just where we so sadly fail. We are occupied with ourselves and our little doings, and sayings, and thinkings. We attach importance to work, not in proportion to its bearing upon the glory of Christ, but its bearing upon our own reputation.

If Christ were our one Object — as He surely will be throughout eternity, and ought to be now — we should not care the least who did the work, or who rendered the service, provided His name was glorified, and His heart refreshed. Harken to the utterance of a truly devoted heart in reference to the very subject before us. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain. Yea, and if I be offered [or poured out] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me" (Phil. 2:14-18).

This is uncommonly fine. The blessed Apostle presents in this exquisite passage a true sample of self-forgetting devotedness. He expresses himself as ready to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of his beloved Philippians, utterly regardless of himself. It mattered not to him who contributed the component parts of the sacrifice, provided only that the sacrifice was presented as a sweet odor to Christ. There was none of that contemptible littleness and self-occupation about that beloved servant of Christ, which so often, alas! appear in us, and prevent our appreciation of another's service. We are all alive when any little service of our own happens to be on the tapis. We listen with intense interest to any one speaking or writing about our usefulness, or the result of our preachings or writings; but we hear with cold apathy and marked indifference the record of a brother's success. We are by no means ready to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of another's faith. We like to provide both meat offering and drink offering ourselves. In a word, we are deplorably selfish, and assuredly never is self more thoroughly contemptible than when it dares to mix itself up with the service of God. Bustling self-importance in the work of Christ, or in the Church of God, is about the most hideously ugly thing in all this world. Self-occupation is the deathblow to fellowship and to all true service. Nor this only; it is also the fruitful source of strife and division in the Church of God. Hence the deep need of those faithful and most wholesome words of the blessed Apostle, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every

name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Here lies the grand remedy for the terrible malady of self-occupation in all its phases. It is having Christ before our hearts, and His lowly mind formed in us by the Holy Spirit. It is utterly impossible to drink into the spirit of Jesus, to breathe the atmosphere of His presence, and be occupied with self in any shape or form. The two things are in direct opposition. In proportion as Christ fills the heart, self and its belongings must be excluded; and if Christ occupies the heart, we shall rejoice to see His name magnified, His cause prospering, His people blessed, His gospel spread abroad, no matter who may be used as His instrument. We may rest assured that wherever there is envy, or jealousy, or strife, there self is uppermost in the heart. The blessed Apostle could rejoice if Christ was preached, even though it was of contention.

But to return to the family of Bethany. We wish the reader to notice particularly the three distinct phases of Christian life exemplified in Lazarus, Mary, and Martha; namely, communion, worship, and service. Should we not each one of us seek to realize and exemplify all the three? Is it not interesting and important to observe that in John 12 there is no question raised between Martha and Mary? Is not this accounted for by the fact that in this beautiful passage we have the divine and heavenly side of the subject?

In Luke 10 we have the human side. Here, alas! there is collision. Let us read the passage. “Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house” —it was Martha’s house, and of course she had to manage it. “And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word”—blessed, privileged place! “But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Here we find that Martha’s self-occupation marred her service, and drew forth words of reproof from the lips of her loving, yet faithful Lord—words, we may safely say, which would never have fallen upon her ear had she not interfered with her sister Mary. Her service had its place and its value, and her Lord knew well how to appreciate it; but, blessed be His name, He will not allow anyone to interfere with another. Each had her own place, her own line of things. Jesus loved Martha and her sister, but if Martha would complain of her sister, she must learn that there is something more to be thought of than preparing a supper. Had Martha gone quietly on with her work, having Christ as her Object in all that she was doing, she would not have had a rebuff; but she was evidently in a wrong spirit. She was not in communion with the mind of Christ; had she been so, she never could have used such words to her Lord, as “Dost Thou not care?” Surely He does care about us, and He is interested in all our works and ways. The smallest service done to Him is precious to His loving heart, and will never be forgotten.

But we must not interfere with another’s service, or intrude in any way upon his domain. Our blessed Lord will not suffer it. Whatever He gives us to do, let it be done simply to Him. This is the grand point. There is not the slightest necessity for jostling one another. There is ample space for

all, and the very highest sphere is open to all. We may all enjoy intimate communion; we may all worship; we may all serve; we may all be acceptable. But the moment we set about making invidious comparisons, we are clearly out of the current of the Master's mind. Martha, no doubt, thought her sister rather deficient in action. She was mistaken. The best preparation for action is sitting at the Master's feet to hear His word. Had Martha understood this, she would not have complained of her sister; but, inasmuch as she herself raised the question, and gave occasion for any comparison, she had to learn that a hearing ear, and a worshiping heart, are more precious by far than busy hands. Alas! our hands may be very busy, while the ear is heavy, and the heart far away! but if the heart be right, then the ear, the hands, the feet, yea, all will be right. "My son, give Me thine heart."

We do not mean to imply that Martha's heart was not right in the main. Far from it. We feel assured it was. But there was an element which needed correction, as there is in all of us. She was a little occupied with her service. "Dolt Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." This was all wrong. She ought to have known that service was not confined to cooking—that there was something higher than meat and drink. Ten thousand might be got to prepare a supper, for one that would break an alabaster box. Not that our Lord undervalued the supper; but what would that supper have been to Him without the ointment, the tears, the hair? What is any act of service without the deep and true devotion of the heart? Nothing. But, on the other hand, where the heart is really engaged with Christ, the smallest act is precious to Him. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath" (2 Cor. 8:12).

Here lies the root of the whole matter. It is an easy thing to bustle about in so-called service, to run from house to house, and place to place, visiting and talking; and after all there may not be a single spark of genuine affection for Christ, but the mere worthless activity of a self-occupied mind, an unbroken will, the workings of a heart that has never known the constraining power of the love of Christ. The grand point is to find our place at the feet of our gracious Lord, in worship and adoration; and then we shall be ready for any sphere of action which He may see fit to open for us. If we make service-our object, our service will become a snare and a hindrance. If Christ be our Object, we are sure to do the right thing, without thinking about ourselves or our work. Thus it was with Mary. She was occupied with her Lord, and not with herself or her alabaster box. She sought not to interfere with anyone else. She complained not of Lazarus at the table, or of Martha with her household cares. She was absorbed with Christ and His position at the moment. The true instincts of love led her to see what was fitting for the occasion, and grateful to His heart; and she did that—did it with all her heart.

Yes, and her Lord appreciated her act. And not only so, but when Martha complained of her, He very soon taught her, her mistake; and when Judas, with ill-concealed covetousness, talked of her act as being a waste, he too got his answer. Heartless man! hiding his covetousness under the cloak of caring for the poor. No one can have a true heart for the poor, who does not love Christ. Judas—professor, and apostle, and all, as he was—loved money; alas! no uncommon love. He had no heart for Christ, although he may have preached and cast out devils in His blessed name. He could talk of selling the ointment for three hundred pence, and giving it to the poor; but, oh! the Holy Spirit, who measures everything by the one standard of the glory of Christ, lets us see the roots of things; and He it is who tells the full truth as to Judas. "This he said, not that he cared for

the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.”

How truly awful! To be outwardly so near the Lord; to profess His name; to be an apostle; to talk about giving to the poor; and all the while to be a thief, and the betrayer of the Son of God!

Dear Christian reader, let us ponder these things. Let us seek to live very near to Christ, not in mere profession, but in reality. May we find our place ever in the moral shelter of His holy presence, there to find our delight in Him, and thus be fitted to serve Him, and witness for His name.

The Bible: Its Unity

If a friend handed to us a ponderous volume consisting of sixty-six books written by between thirty and forty persons, and at different times extending over fifteen hundred years, and said, Notwithstanding all their differences there is a remarkable unity throughout, should we not be astonished? As a matter of fact, there is no such book as the Bible in this respect; nor could there be, unless all the writings it contained had been under the guidance of one mind, and its communications throughout given by the one Spirit.

One thing which would be likely to strike some persons in considering the principle of unity in a book, would be to compare the end with the beginning, and see if there were any connection as to similarity or contrast. In the Bible it is written, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." Acts 15:18. Let us turn and examine a few scriptures as to this.

The first words we find in the Bible are, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), and as a matter of fact, much of the Bible is about God's heavenly and earthly people; also as to things in connection with the present heaven and earth; and in the end of the Book we read of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1).

In the beginning of the Book it is said, "Let there be light: and there was light"; afterward we are told that Christ is "the light of the world"; and in the end of the Book we read that "the Lamb is the light thereof."

In the beginning, we read of a tree of life in the garden of Eden, from which man was afterward excluded through his sin; in the end we find "the tree of life" with its many fruits, and are taught that the faithful will eat of "the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Gen. 2:9; Rev. 2:7; 22:2.)

A river too was in Eden, and at the end of Revelation we read of "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Gen. 2:10; Rev. 22:1.)

In Genesis 2 we see the first man (figure of Him that was to come) and his helpmeet, of whom he could say, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh"; and in Revelation 21 we have presented to us "the bride, the Lamb's wife.... Having the glory of God," of whom it had been said that He "nourisheth and cherisheth it," and that "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." (Rev. 21:9, 11; Eph. 5:29, 30.)

In the earthly paradise man was in dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over every creeping thing; and the name he gave to every living creature, that was the name thereof; but toward the end of the Book the Lord Jesus, the last Adam, will bring this groaning creation into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, and have His rightful place as "Lord of all," having subdued all things unto Himself (Gen. 1:28; 2:19; Psalms 8; Phil. 2:10, 11; 3:21).

In the beginning we have Satan tempting, then sin, and the curse; and in the end we see Satan in the lake of fire, sin taken away, righteousness dwelling, and no more curse. In the beginning,

sorrow and death; in the end, "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Gen. 3; Rev. 20:10; 2 Pet. 3:13; 1 John 3:5; Rev. 21:14.)

Surely then we find a remarkable unity of thought in the beginning and ending of the Bible, though the contrasts are most striking, because the Son of God had come meanwhile to accomplish redemption, destroy the works of the devil, take away sins, make good the promises, vindicate God in all His ways, honor Him in perfect obedience as man, and glorify Him in clearing us from all iniquity, and bring us to God to share the inheritance with Him who is heir of all things.

Another mark of unity is found in the truth it sets forth throughout. If early in the Old Testament it is said of man that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," it is said in the New Testament that "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed, can be." (Gen. 6:5; Rom. 8:7.) If a prophet in olden time said, "All flesh is as grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:... the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever"; an apostle, seven hundred years after, writes the same, only adding to "the word of the Lord endureth forever," "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (Isa. 40:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:24, 25.) If the psalmist exclaimed, "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven," our Lord said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." (Psalm 119:89; Matt. 24:35.) If the testimony of a prophet was, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts," an apostle informs us that "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (Zech. 4:6; 1 Cor. 2:11.) If Moses was inspired to write, "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul," we read in Hebrews that "without shedding of blood is no remission." (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22.) If an Old Testament writer warned the people not to "add unto the word" which he commanded them, "neither shall ye diminish aught from it," the ancient writings are not closed without enforcing the exhortation by saying, "Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar"; nor can the canon of Scripture be concluded without the last of Revelation giving us the most solemn warning concerning it. (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18, 19.)...

It is important to observe the unity of thought pervading all Scripture as to man's utter ruin and incurably bad condition, calling for nothing less than being born anew. If early in Scripture we are told that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," many hundreds of years after, another prophet declared that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"; while hundreds of years later our Lord said, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts," etc., and He did not name anything good in it. Later on an apostle declared that "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7); so that as to man's moral condition in God's sight, ever since the fall, the testimony throughout has been that "there is none righteous, no not one." The giving of the law, instead of helping or improving those who accepted the yoke, only caused the offense to abound, and gave "the knowledge of sin." Happy are they who so know the Lord Jesus Christ as their life and peace as to be not under the law and vainly hoping to reach God by doings and efforts, but as brought to God in Christ, and through His precious blood can bow in adoring praise and thanksgiving to Him for the accomplished work of eternal redemption.

The bright line which runs from Genesis to Revelation, and gives the whole Book a unity which nothing else could, is its testimony to the infinite glory of the Person of the Son, the eternal efficacy of His one sacrifice for sin, His moral worth and excellency beyond all thought, the glorious offices on our account He now sustains, as well as His glories yet to be revealed when He comes with clouds, and His saints accompany Him, to put down all that is contrary to God, and fulfill all the promises to Israel, and much more, which assure us of the verity of our Savior's words when speaking of the "Scriptures," "They are they which testify of Me." John 5:39.

The Book That Explains All

It is not the Bible that makes man a guilty sinner; but the Bible is the only key to all, and explains it fully and worthily. This Book alone carries conviction for every heart that is willing to bow to God and be saved; but the truth is that people do not want to be saved in God's way. They prefer the full activity of life to be their own, and to enjoy the world as long as they can.

The Captain of the Host of the Lord

Josh. 5:13-15; 6:1-5

We look at Joshua in the portion before us as a man of faith in whom the Spirit of Christ is, and we see him the spring and energy of Israel.

Joshua was by Jericho, surveying its walls rising up to heaven, and its brazen gates; and as Israel had no offensive weapons of war wherewith to throw down these defenses, how should this stronghold be won? Reason might suggest a thousand difficulties; God presents us with a sight of the man of faith alone with Himself, obtaining His mind as to the victory. The forces of the world are to us what the defenses of Jericho were to the nomad tribes of Israel. In ourselves we are impotent before them. With divine power all things are possible.

As Joshua lifted his eyes, he saw before him a man with a drawn sword in His hand. Here was the divine revelation to him, and thither he turned his eyes, not on the defenses of Jericho. In the energy of his soul, Joshua challenged the Stranger, who declared Himself to be the Captain, or Prince, of the host of Jehovah, whereon Joshua immediately fell on his face before Him, and sought His bidding.

God's resources are infinite, and He makes them known to us in Christ, according to His own glory and our need. To Moses He discovered Himself in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, for His people were in the furnace of affliction, and of Him they were not consumed; "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them" (Isa. 63:9); and on the holy ground of Jehovah's presence, with unshod feet, Moses received his mission of deliverance for Israel from Egypt's bondage. To Joshua, Jehovah revealed Himself in Christ, as the Prince of all power, as the Captain of the host of heaven, on behalf of Israel, His army; and with unshod feet, on the holy ground of the presence of the Lord, Joshua learned the way Jericho was to be overthrown, and gained the knowledge that Jehovah had given over to Israel, the city, its kings, and all its men of war. And worshipping at the feet of the Son of man risen from the dead, the soldier of Christ learns the end of the powers of evil and of this world.

As the supreme authority, the absolute power, of Christ our Lord engages the heart, faith increases, and we give heed to the exhortation, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10). To the Lord Jesus Christ, as man, all power is given in heaven and in earth (Matt. 18:18). God has put all things under His feet (Eph. 1:22). He, in heaven, "is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:10). True Christian conflict is for His glory and for His alone; hence, so far as the Christian is truly warring for Christ, the array of Satan's powers is against him. "We wrestle not," says the Scripture, "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [heavenly] places." Eph. 6:12. In the presence of these mighty forces, as we recognize, by faith, the Captain of the Lord's host, and as we are strong in Him and in the power of His might, so we overcome.

The drawn sword had now taken the place of the outstretched rod. The rod was the emblem of divine guidance and deliverance out of Egypt, but the sword was that of divine guidance and victory in Canaan. No longer were Israel led as a flock; they were henceforth the army sent by God to overthrow the iniquity of Canaan. We greatly mistake Scripture if we confine our testimony to comfort and peace, for therein also are words of judgment and of woe. In the most emphatic way, at this time, out of the mouth of the Lord goes a sharp two-edged sword (Rev. 1:16); and decided and unmitigated judgment against evil is pronounced from heaven against iniquity. In the hastening day of the kingdom, when the heavens shall be opened, the Lord, the Faithful and the True, shall smite the nations with the sharp sword which goeth out of His mouth. (Rev. 19:15, 21.) The exceeding terribleness of God's wrath against sin, and the testimony to the judgment Christ will, by His word, execute against sinners, form part of Christian offensive warfare against this world. To render such testimony, we must have our hearts occupied with the revelation of Himself with the drawn sword, and this revelation is received at His feet. (Read Rev. 1.)

The whole of the solemn passage we are considering should be read as the verses are given in the heading of this article. In it this parenthesis occurs: "Now Jericho did shut up, and was shut up [margin] because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in." The whole passage gives us God's mind about the sword, the end of Jericho, and His way of bringing about its overthrow. The parenthesis states what was Jericho's condition; and occurring, as it does, between the statement of Joshua's worshiping on the holy ground of the divine Presence and the revelation concerning Jericho's end, it is most suggestive. We learn God's mind in the sanctuary of His presence; and, according as we are in His presence, so does He reveal His truth to us. He who became dead, lives to die no more; we bow at the feet of the Son of man in glory.

Where Joshua fell down, and where John fell down, let us fall down and worship. At His feet are revealed the reality of His sword and the judgment of the world. The history of evil, dark and dreadful as it is, is but a brief parenthesis in the purposes of God. A rebellious life, or the life of a rebellious world that goes on its course in resolute opposition to God, is a thing of a moment, viewed in the light of eternal ages. Indeed, the world's history is but the parenthesis of the creature's will, occurring in the midst of the divine purpose. How soon will all be over! Boast as the world does, or as a worldly man may do, in shutting God out, sudden destruction must come, and there will be no escape.

Observing the parenthetical verse, it is seen that the Captain of the Lord's host is Jehovah-Jesus, who gave Joshua directions as to the manner of Israel's warfare, and before a step was taken, laid out their mysterious career on the number of the days of a week. The number seven governed their proceedings; for priests, trumpets, days, and times, all were sevenfold. God has marked out His dealings with the earth into periods of sevens; from Genesis to Revelation, His ways with the earth in reference to the kingdom are thus divided; and each week we live proclaims to every man the history of time, and in the last moments of that history our lot is cast.

The array of Israel is also suggestive. The ark that has brought them into Canaan was the center of the armed host (v. 9), and so is Christ the center of the army of God's people, while before the ark went praise - the seven priests; and true it is, that in Christian warfare, praise sevenfold is in the front. The character of the praise too is significant, for each priest had the trump of gladness, the cornet of jubilee (not a ram's horn), the notes of which proclaimed freedom - liberty - the

acceptable year of the Lord. These joyful sounds were to fall continually upon the ears of the men of Jericho, as the armed men encircled the city.

Such was the array of Israel, day by day, until the end. Let such be ours-Christ first, praise next, then work- a foolish spectacle to the world, it is true, but "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." 2 Cor. 10:4.

Jesus Christ: the Same Yesterday and Today

If we, beloved, did but value what we have in Christ, if we but took account of our condition in relation to the Lord, and not in relation to circumstances, we should always be happy beyond expression-our joy would be full. But it is in that point we fail. We love circumstances; we live in the power of them too much, in the light of the Lord's favor too little; and we are dull, and low, and halfhearted. Were it not so with us, the journeys in company with the cloud, checkered as they are, would find us and leave us still a happy people. For it is one Jesus throughout, whether it be the day of the blood (Ex. 12), of the song (Ex. 15), or of the cloud (Ex. 13); one and the same Jesus who was with us in the circumstances of human life, in the dying love on the cross, in the life of intercession in heaven, and who will give us His unchanged self in glory forever.

"Content with beholding His face,

My all to His pleasure resigned,

No changes of season or place,

Would make any change in my mind.

"While blessed with a sense of His love,

A palace a toy would appear;

And prisons would palaces prove,

If Jesus would dwell with me there

A Christian in Polical Power: No Direction

It is most significant that while the New Testament scriptures give ample directions for the behavior of the husband to the wife and the wife to the husband, of the children to the parent and the parent to the children, of the servant to the master and the master to the servant, and while they also lay down the conduct proper from a subject to the powers that be, they give no directions whatever as to the way of executing political trust.

A Christian under authority has ample directions how to act. A Christian wielding political power has no directions at all. Why this omission? True, Christians at the time when the New Testament was written, were not in a state to exercise political power; but if God had meant them to be placed in this position of responsibility, would He have withheld instructions as to the way in which they were to fill it? Was He so short-sighted that He omitted to provide for a state of things which would receive His sanction; or did He expressly withhold all directions because the position was one to which His sanction could not be given? The character of believers as "not of the world," as associated with Christ in His "patience," as fellow heirs with Him whom God has not yet put in possession of the inheritance, fully explains the omission- and nothing else can. Strange indeed if He has authorized and instructed the fellow heirs of Christ to take part in bringing about that state of things in which they will shortly be associated with Christ in judgment, and overturning!

But did not Jesus, it may be asked, go about doing good? And may not the possession of political power and interference in the world's concerns, be the means of doing great good? This, however, is man's reasoning; and the place of a believer is not to reason, but to obey. Looked at broadly, in the light of God's truth, a Christian cannot do good by political action, for the end to which everything is working is plainly taught in the Word; and that end is not good, but awfully bad.

Leaving, however, the domain of argument, and falling back on Scripture, what does the Word of God teach us? Undoubtedly it tells us that Jesus went about doing good; and it tells us too, that believers are placed here for the same object for which He was here - "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." John 17:18. How then did Jesus do good? Was it by the exercise of political power? Was it by worldly combinations and societies? Was it by seeking popular support? Himself the only one who had a right to rule, or whose rule could bring blessing, He absolutely declined to receive power. Offered it by the devil, He at once detected and denounced the deceiver. Asked to take the place of an arbiter, He replied, "Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" Luke 12:14. Perceiving that the people "would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone." John 6:15.

In private, none ever labored as He to do good. But the time for public and governmental blessing to the earth had not yet come. The scepter was not yet put into His hands by the only One who had a right to bestow it, and He would receive it from no other. If the scepter was not given by His Father, it must be either taken from the "god of this world." or from man; and from neither of these would He accept it. In what respect are things altered? Has God yet changed His mode of dealing

with the world? Can the Christian receive power from hands from which Christ refused it? Or will God give it to the fellow heirs while He is yet withholding it from the One whom He has made heir of all things?

Christian Training for Our Children

We believe the whole business of Christian education is summed up in two brief sentences; namely, count on God for your children; train your children for God. To take the first without the second, is antinomianism; to take the second without the first, is legality; to take both together is sound practical Christianity - true religion in the sight of God and man.

It is the sweet privilege of every Christian parent to count, with all possible confidence, upon God for his children. But then we must remember that there is, in the government of God, an inseparable link connecting this privilege with the most solemn responsibility as to training. For a Christian parent to speak of counting on God for the salvation of his children, and for the moral integrity of their future career in this world, while the duty of training is neglected, is simply a miserable delusion.

We press this most solemnly upon all Christian parents, but especially upon those who have just entered upon the relationship. There is great danger of shirking our duty to our children, of shifting it upon others, or neglecting it altogether. We do not like the trouble of it; we shrink from the constant worry as it seems to us. But we shall find that the trouble, and the worry, and the sorrow, and the heart-scalding arising from the neglect of our duty will be a thousand times worse than all that can be involved in the discharge of it. To every true lover of God there is deep delight in treading the path of duty. Every step taken in that path strengthens our confidence to go on. And then we can always count upon the infinite resources that we have in God, when we are keeping His commandments. We have simply to betake ourselves, morning by morning, hour by hour, to our Father's exhaustless treasury, and there get all we need in the way of grace and wisdom and moral power to enable us to discharge aright the holy functions of our relationship. "He giveth more grace." This always holds good. But if we, instead of seeking grace to discharge our duty, seek ease in neglecting it, we are simply laying up a store of sorrow which will accumulate rapidly and fall upon us heavily at a future day. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. 6:7, 8.

This is the condensed statement of a great principle of God's moral government - a principle of universal application, and one which applies with singular force to the subject before us. As we sow, in the matter of the education of our children, so we shall, most assuredly, reap. There is no getting out of this.

But let not any dear Christian parent whose eye may scan these lines, be at all discouraged or fainthearted. There is no reason whatever for this; but, on the contrary, every reason for the most joyful confidence in God. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe." Pro. 18:10. Let us tread with a firm step the path of duty; and then we can count with unwavering confidence upon our ever faithful and gracious God for the need of each day as it rolls along. And in due time we shall reap the precious fruit of our labor, according to the appointment of God, and in pursuance of the enactments of His moral government.

We do not attempt to lay down any rules or regulations for the training. We do not believe in such. Children cannot be trained by dry rules. Who could attempt to embody in rules all that is wrapped up in that one sentence, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4)?

Here we have, indeed, a golden rule which takes in everything from the cradle to maturity. Yes, we repeat, "from the cradle"; for we are most fully persuaded that all true Christian training begins at the very beginning. Some of us have little idea of how soon and how sharply children begin to observe, and how much they take in as they gaze at us through their dear expressive eyes.

And then how marvelously susceptible they are of the moral atmosphere which surrounds them! Yes; and it is this very moral atmosphere that constitutes the grand secret of training our families. Our children should be permitted to breathe from day to day the atmosphere of love and peace, purity, holiness, and true practical righteousness. This has an amazing effect in forming the character. It is a great thing for our children to see their parents walking in love, in harmony, in tender care one for the other, in love and sympathy for the poor. Who can measure the moral effect upon a child of the very first angry look or unkind word between father and mother? And in cases where the daily history is one of unsightly strife and contention, the father contradicting the mother, and the mother disparaging the father, how are children to grow in such an atmosphere as this?

The fact is, it is not within the compass of human language to set forth all that is involved in the moral tone of the entire family circle—the spirit, style, and atmosphere of the whole household. It is not a question of rank, position, or wealth, but of the beautiful grace of God shining out in all. There may be the stalled ox, or the dinner of herbs; these are not, at present, in question. But what we press on all fathers and mothers, all heads of households, high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, is the necessity of training their children in an atmosphere of love and peace, truth and holiness, purity and kindness. Thus will their households be the practical exhibition of the character of God; and all who come in contact with them will, at least, have before their eyes a practical witness to the truth of Christianity.

But ere we turn from the subject of domestic government, there is one special point to which we desire to call the attention of Christian parents a point of the utmost possible moment, yet too much neglected among us, and that is the need of inculcating upon our children the duty of implicit obedience. This cannot be too strongly insisted upon, inasmuch as it not only affects the order and comfort of our households, but, what is infinitely more important, it concerns the glory of God, and the practical carrying out of His truth. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." And again, "Children, obey your parents in all things: for, this is well pleasing unto the Lord." (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20.)

This is absolutely essential and must be firmly insisted upon from the very outset. The child must be taught to obey from his earliest moments. He must be trained to submit himself to divinely appointed authority, and that, as the Apostle puts it, "in all things." If this be not attended to from the very first, it will be found almost impossible to attend to it afterward. If the will be allowed to act, it grows with terrible rapidity, and each day's growth increases the difficulty of bringing it under control. Hence, the parent should begin at once to establish his authority on a basis of moral strength and firmness; and, when this is done, he may be as gentle and tender as the most loving heart could desire. We do not believe in sternness, harshness, or severity. They are by no means

necessary, and are generally the accompaniments of bad training and the proofs of bad temper. God has put into the parent's hand the reins of government, and the rod of authority; but it is not needful - if we may so express it - to be continually chucking the reins and brandishing the rod, which are the sure proofs of moral weakness. Whenever you hear a man continually talking about his authority, you may be sure his authority is not properly established. There is a quiet dignity about true moral power which is perfectly unmistakable.

Furthermore, we judge it to be a mistake for a parent to be perpetually crossing a child's will in matters of no moment. Such a line of action tends to break the child's spirit, whereas the object of all sound training is to break the will. The child should ever be impressed with the idea that the parent seeks only his real good, and that if he has to refuse or prohibit anything, it is not for the purpose of curtailing the child's enjoyment, but simply for the promotion of his true interests.

One grand object of domestic government is to protect each member of the household in the enjoyment of his privileges, and in the proper discharge of his relative duties. Now, inasmuch as it is the divinely appointed duty of a child to obey, the parent is responsible to see this duty discharged; for if it be neglected, some other members of the domestic circle must suffer.

There can be no greater nuisance in a house than a naughty willful child; and, as a general rule, wherever you find such, it is to be traced to bad training. We are aware, of course, that children differ in temper and disposition, that some children have peculiarly strong wills and sturdy tempers, and are therefore specially hard to manage.

All this we quite understand; but it leaves wholly untouched the question of the parent's responsibility to insist upon implicit obedience. He can always count on God for the needed grace and power to carry out this point. Even in the case of a widowed mother, we believe, most assuredly, she can look to God to enable her to command her children and her household. In no case, therefore, should parental authority be surrendered for, a moment.

It sometimes happens that through injudicious fondness the parent is tempted to pamper the will of the child; but it is sowing to the flesh, and must yield corruption. It is not true love at all to indulge a child's will; neither can it possibly minister to his true happiness or legitimate enjoyment. An over-indulged, self-willed child is miserable himself, and a grievous infliction on all who have to do with him.

It is essential to family peace, harmony, and comfort, that all the members should "consider one another." We are responsible to seek the good and the happiness of those around us, and not our own. If all would but remember this, what different households we should have! and what a different tale would families have to tell! Every Christian household should be the reflection of the divine character. The atmosphere should just be the very atmosphere of heaven. How is this to be? Simply by each one, parents and children, seeking to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and manifest His Spirit. He never pleased Himself, never sought His own interest in anything. He did always the thing that pleased the Father. He came to serve and to give. He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. Thus it was ever with the most blessed One - the gracious, loving, sympathizing Friend of all the sons and daughters of want, weakness, and sorrow; and if only the various members of each Christian family were formed on this perfect model, we should, at least, realize something of the power and efficacy of personal and domestic

Christianity, which, blessed be God, can ever be maintained and exhibited notwithstanding the hopeless ruin of the professing church. "Thou and thy house" suggests a great golden principle which runs through the volume of God from beginning to end. In every age, under every dispensation, in the days of the patriarchs, in the days of the law, and in the days of Christianity, we find, to our exceeding comfort and encouragement, that personal and domestic godliness has its place as something grateful to the heart of God and to the glory of His holy name.

This we consider to be most consolatory at all times, but more particularly at a time like the present when the professing church seems so rapidly sinking into gross worldliness and open infidelity;

and not this only, but when those who most earnestly desire to walk in obedience to the Word of God, and to act on the grand foundation truth of the unity of the body, find it so difficult to maintain a corporate testimony. In view of all this, we may well bless God with overflowing hearts that personal and family piety can always be maintained, and that from the heart and the home of every Christian a constant stream of praise may ascend to the throne of God, and a stream of active benevolence flow out to a needy, sorrowful, sin-stricken world. May it be so more and more, through the mighty ministry of God the Holy Ghost, that God, in all things, may be glorified in the hearts and homes of His beloved people!

Close Accounts

My Christian friend, ever bear in mind these two things: that there is nothing so strong as the link of relationship, and nothing so tender as the link of communion.

All the combined power and counsel of earth and hell cannot sever the former, while an impure motive or idle word will break the latter.

If you are troubled with a cloudy half hour, get low before God, consider your ways; and when the cause that has robbed you of your joy has been detected, bring it at once to the light, confess your sin to God your Father, and judge yourself most unsparingly for the unwatchful, careless state of soul that allowed the thief to enter unchallenged.

But, never, never, NEVER confound your safety with your joy.

Consistency

Of one thing be assured, no truth avails unless you are prepared to carry it out in every day's practice. The world will let you hold and even say anything provided they see that you have no serious thought of being faithful, and so calling them to be the same. He then has not the smallest resemblance to the Lord's messenger, who says one thing and does another, who denounces the world, yet seeks it for his family, judges rightly, yet never thinks of acting out his convictions. Is this living so as to give effect to a divine testimony? He who is the living spring of the truth is also the Holy Spirit. What can be more calculated to destroy the truth than practical inconsistency with it?

Diversity and Unity: Each Needed in His Place

It is at once interesting and instructive to mark the varied lines of truth presented in the New Testament, all finding their common center in that blessed One who is the truth. We see this, both in the gospels and in the epistles. Each of the four evangelists, under the direct guidance and power of the Holy Ghost, gives us a distinct view of Christ. Matthew presents Him in His Jewish relations-as the Messiah, the Son of David, Son of Abraham - heir of the promises made to the fathers. Mark presents Him as the earnest workman, the diligent servant, the laborious minister, the incessant teacher and preacher. Luke gives us the Man Christ Jesus, in His human relations, Son of man, Son of Adam. John is occupied with the Son of God, Son of the Father, the heavenly Man, in His heavenly relationships.

Thus each one has his own specific line. No two are alike, but all agree. There is lovely variety, but the most perfect harmony; there is diversity and unity. Matthew does not interfere with Mark, nor Mark with Luke, nor Luke with John. There is no collision, because each moves in his own proper orbit, and all revolve round the one grand center.

Nor could we do without any one of the four. There would be a serious blank if one were missing. We could not afford to give up a single ray of the moral glory of the Son of God; and not only so, but we could not consent to ignore one of those instruments by which the Holy Ghost has presented Him to our view. We want them all. Each fills his own niche and fulfills his own service under the guiding hand of the Holy Ghost.

So also is it in the epistles. Paul's line of things is as distinct from Peter's as Peter's is from John's, or John's from James'. No two are alike, but all agree. There is no collision because, like the four evangelists, each moves in his own appointed orbit, and all revolve round the one common center. The orbit is distinct, but the center is one. Paul gives us the great truth of man's relation with God on the ground of accomplished redemption, together with the counsels of God as to Israel and the Church. Peter gives us the Christian pilgrimage and God's government of the world. James insists upon practical righteousness. John opens up the grand theme of eternal life, first with the Father, then manifested in the Son - communicated to us, and finally displayed in the glorious future.

Now it would be the very height of folly on our part to institute any invidious comparison between those varied lines of truth, or the beloved and honored instruments by whom those lines are presented to us. How silly it would be to set up Matthew against Mark, Mark against Luke, Luke against John, or John against all the rest! How puerile it would be for anyone to say, "I go for Paul's line of things only. James seems below the mark. Peter and John I do not appreciate. Paul is the man for me. His ministry suits me. The others do not reach my heart or feed my soul as he does."

All this we should at once denounce as the most sinful folly. It should not be tolerated for a moment. The varied lines of truth all converge upon one glorious and blessed center. The varied instruments are all employed by one and the selfsame inspiring Spirit, for the one grand object of

presenting the varied moral glories of Christ. We need them all. We could no more afford to do without Matthew or Mark than we could do without Luke or John; and it is no part of our business to undervalue Peter or James, because they do not give such a lofty or comprehensive range of truth as Paul or John. Each is needful in his place. Each has his niche to fill, his work to do, his appointed line of things to attend to; and we should be doing serious damage to our own souls, as well as marring the integrity of divine revelation, if we were to confine ourselves to any one particular line of truth, or attach ourselves exclusively to any one particular instrument or vessel.

The early Corinthians fell into this grave error, and thus called forth a sharp rebuke from the Apostle Paul. Some were of Paul; some of Apollos; some of Cephas; some of Christ. All were wrong; and those who said they were of Christ were quite as wrong as any of the others. They were carnal, and walked as men. It was a grievous folly to be puffed up for one against another, inasmuch as they were all Christ's servants, and all belonged to the whole Church.

Nor is it otherwise now in the Church of God. There are varied kinds of workmen, and varied lines of truth; and it is our happy privilege, not to say our holy duty, to recognize and rejoice in them all. To be puffed up for one against another is to be "carnal, and walk as men." To depreciate any of Christ's servants is to depreciate the truth which he carries, and to forsake our own mercies. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." [But we must mark this difference - the servants used to write the various parts of Scripture were divinely inspired. This cannot be said of even the ablest servant of the Lord today.- E d.]

This is the true and the divine way to look at the matter; and this too is the way to avoid sects, parties, and cliques in the Church of God. There is one body, one Head, one Spirit, one divine and perfect revelation - the Holy Scriptures. There are many members, many gifts, many lines of truth, many distinct characters of ministry. We need them all, and therefore God has given them all.

But, most surely, God has not given the various gifts and ministries for us to set one against another, but that we may humbly and thankfully avail ourselves of all, and profit by them according to His gracious purpose in giving them. If all were Pauls, where were the Peters? If all were Peters, where were the Johns?

Nor this only; but what must be the effect of going in for any one particular line of truth, or character of ministry? What but to produce an imperfect Christian character? We are all sadly prone to one-sidedness, and nothing more ministers to this evil than an inordinate attachment to some one particular branch of truth, to the exclusion of other branches equally important. It is by "the truth" we are sanctified - by all, not by some truth. We should delight in every department of truth, and give a cordial welcome to each vessel or instrument which our God may be pleased to use in ministering His truth to our souls. To be puffed up for one against another is to be more occupied with the vessel than with the truth which the vessel contains, more occupied with man than with God - a fatal mistake! "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?"

Here lies the grand principle. God has various instruments for His work. We need them all, and we should value them all as His instruments, and nothing more. It has ever been Satan's object to lead the Lord's people to set up heads of schools, leaders of parties, centers of cliques, thus

splitting up the Church of God into sects, and destroying its visible unity. Let us not be ignorant of his devices, but in every possible way endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

How is this great object to be attained? By keeping near the center - by abiding in Christ - by habitual occupation with Himself-by drinking deeply into His spirit and walking in His footsteps - by lying at His feet in true brokenness of spirit and humility of mind, by thorough consecration to His service, the furtherance of His cause, the promotion of His glory, the prosperity and blessing of every beloved member of His body.

Thus shall we be delivered from strife and contention, from the discussion of profitless questions, and baseless theories, from partiality, prejudice, and predilection. We shall be able to see and appreciate all the varied lines of truth converging upon the one divine center, the varied rays of light emanating from the one eternal source. We shall rejoice in the great fact that in all the ways and works of God, in every department of nature and grace, in things on earth and things in heaven, in time and in eternity, it is not a dull uniformity but a delightful variety. In a word, God's universal and eternal principle is "DIVERSITY AND UNITY."

The Eternal Son of God As Man

Never was there any character down here like that of the eternal Son of God as Man - a character that has a depth and height in it that could be found in none but in God Himself, and could have been sketched only by the Holy Ghost. Satan would have done all in heaven and earth to have dimmed its perfectness, but he could not touch that holy undefiled One. It was God drawing near to man according to His own character; the whole thing, from the manger to the cross, was divine.

It is a very real thing to have to do with Christ; when you receive Christ, you meet all the moral glory of God in the face of that Christ; not merely His glory shining there, but all the tender affections of the Father's heart of love displayed in Him who took our form and dwelt among us as man.

Why was He to leave heaven and come down here-the perfect, matchless, peerless God-man? What was this world to Him? people might ask. Ah! God had all His plans centered in that One. From the foundation of the world it was ordained that He should take up the question of sin; and whatsoever the ruin and the misery brought in by it, Christ was perfectly equal to turning all the ruin to His own glory.

No one but the Son of God Himself could look UP in God's face and say, "I can settle the question of sin." None save He could look down into the heart and mind of a sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, and say, "I know exactly what you are, and I can do a work of which God can say that He has found His rest, and through which He is perfectly free to deal in grace with the most wretched sinner."

There is no part of the life of the blessed Lord in which He stands forth so conspicuously as God as when on the cross, able to meet the whole volume of God's wrath for sin, bearing in His own body sins heaped up without number, and by the sacrifice of Himself making clear God's right to be just in justifying the sinner. The character of God as Love displayed too, in giving His Son to be the accepted sacrifice for sin. God has never before been revealed after this fashion.

The Faith of Rahab

Joshua 2

Jericho, situated in the beautiful plains of the Jordan, was indeed a place of fragrance. It was a city of vast strength in a position of exceeding loveliness. It is a figure of this world headed for judgment by the word of God. Christ will come from heaven with His holy ones, and in flaming fire will execute judgment on the peoples of this earth; He will overthrow the strength and overturn the foundations of this world, and after that He will set up His kingdom and reign. Not only will the present system of this world be destroyed, but the god of this world will be arrested and imprisoned in the pit during the reign of Christ (Rev. 20:1-3).

The coming of Christ was continually proclaimed by the early Christians, and the rights of His kingdom were constantly declared. That testimony told its tale in men's consciences. Heartfelt witness as to God's judgments ever appalls the unready. In our day, the expectation of Christ's advent in judgment to this earth, and of His coming kingdom when He shall reign over it, have too little place in the testimony of Christians; we do not refer to the bare knowledge of the doctrine of Christ's coming, which has no power to move souls. It has pleased God that nearly 2000 years should pass by, and the judgment long foretold still tarries-the kingdom of Christ is not yet set up in power on the earth. There is a double end in this, for on the one hand it is the will of God that His people should learn practically what this world is, both as a wilderness and as a battlefield; on the other, that certain characteristics in the world should be developed.

Forty years had to elapse for Israel in order that they might learn wilderness lessons; but, in the purposes of God, those forty years were one step, as it were, from Egypt to Canaan, for with Him a thousand years are but one day.

In the purposes of God, the world's ways must reach their development, certain characteristics of evil must progress to completion, before Christ comes to the earth in judgment. Hence, since the judgment tarries, it may be said, "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16). However, the

Christian has to keep the eye on Him whose coming in the air may take place at any moment, while rejoicing in the long-suffering of God in His mercy to sinners by His gospel. The development of events is not the polestar whereby the Christian directs his steps. "What saith the Scripture?" guides him

With these considerations we follow the two spies whom Joshua had sent secretly from the camp at Shittim to spy out Jericho. The whole of the incidents attached to their mission may be characterized as hidden work; just as in this day a secret work of God is in progress, while the course of the world is plain to all eyes. Faith in the Word of God as to judgment about to be revealed, is a mighty force in this our Jericho for laboring on in the hidden work of soul winning for God. The two spies were directed (Josh. 2:1) by God to the very house in the city where a prepared heart was to be found....

Standing with Rahab upon the flat roof of her house (v. 8) and looking around, we learn a lesson for our own times. Mark the development of the city, its recent improvements, its great and high walls, and its brazen gates. Look at the face of nature; as since the creation of the world the mountains stand in their places; as heretofore the valleys are golden with ripening corn, the hillsides purple with fruitful vines, for lo! it is the time of harvest. Prosperity and the hope of increasing greatness abound, the expectation of the future fills the soul. How little does the world dream that the sickle which is about to reap the harvest, is one of judgment!

The ancient Jordan flows on, his banks covered with deep waters, as if proudly saying, "I am a barrier to the enemy's approach." The sun, which they worship, calm in the heavens, sinks beneath the mountains, shedding its rich glow over the scented valleys, and the people kiss their hands to it. The business of the city, its commerce and its luxury, the eating flesh and drinking wine, marrying and giving in marriage, birth and death, go on as in former generations. To the scoffers in the city the tale of judgment has grown old; forty long years ago they, or their fathers, heard how Jehovah had dried up the waters of the Red Sea for the people who now at their gates claim their land; but the tale is told, there is nothing now for them to fear!

The testimony as to Christ's coming and His world kingdom is already ridiculed. "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." 2 Pet. 3:4. Be it so, but "when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them" (1 Thess. 5:3). The scoff of infidelity and its destructive effects cannot be denied, but neither can be denied the power of that testimony to Christ's coming and kingdom, which His people live out. When a believer, in the power of faith, testifies by his manner of life to the reality of Christ's coming, men tremble. The acting out of what a man believes, convicts souls. Doctrinal intelligence convinces no man; practical behavior is unanswerable. The person has something which we have not, men say of him who lives Christ; and such a life demonstrates the faith of eternity to them.

The two spies were the exponents of their expectations; they came to Jericho not to make it their home, but to spy it out and to be gone. The Christian is sent into the world to be a witness for God and to Christ's coming and kingdom. Satan cannot destroy the truth, but he nullifies its power wherever the testimony of God's people becomes word only, and lacks the energy of faith.

While the two spies were in converse with Rahab, and listening to her strange tale of melting hearts and departed courage because of Jehovah's might, the king of Jericho heard that they were in his city. At once there arose direct opposition between him and Rahab. Alliance with enemies is madness; breaking with the world and Satan by God's people there must be, and in taking sides with God is alone security...

The wisdom of faith invariably outwits Satan. Rahab "hid" the men (Josh. 2:4) as soon as they were inquired after. If a believer takes to planning, let him remember that Satan is a craftier planner than he. If the believer trusts his Father like a little child, then Satan is beaten before the battle begins.

Because of the lie Rahab told, cavilers would cast a slur on the veracity of the whole story. But God tells the truth about her character and her ways, as about everything; it is man who hides what is not to his credit. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when

she had received the spies with peace." Heb. 11:31. Her faith, not her falsehood, is commended.... Rahab had no right to tell her king a lie any more than a man has liberty to tell a lie to the father of lies. Had her faith in Jehovah gone further, she would have trusted in Him instead of in her deception, for deliverance. A soldier of Christ telling a falsehood in Christ's name is simply a traitor to his Lord.

By faith this poor heathen believed that the days of her city were numbered; her thoughts were not with her fellow citizens, but with the Lord's people. In the two spies she beheld the messengers to her of the God in heaven above and on earth beneath, and her conviction was, "I know that the LORD hath given you the land." I know that the Lord has done this is the incontestable reasoning of faith. Faith knows what God will do, simply because God has spoken. "I know" is an immovable assurance in the heart of the child of faith, which gives infidelity no point of attack whatever.

Faith is at rest toward God and active toward men. The testimony of the spies filled Rahab with assurance as to her own salvation, and with energy for the lives of her whole family. She believed judgment would presently fall on her city; her cry was therefore, "Save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

For the fulfillment of this desire she sought a true token, and the spies gave her their solemn assurance, "Our life for yours." In a similar way we have the bare Word of God for our confidence. On it we rely for our eternal good. "Give me a true token," does anyone say? God's revealed Word is the assurance for our souls.

Having received the promise, to her based on the life of the spies, she "sent them out another way" (Jas. 2:25), letting them down by a cord from her window, for her house was built upon the wall. Then they, being outside of Jericho, gave the outward token, the sign to Rahab-"this line of scarlet thread," and they bade her bind that cord in her window. Whence came this line? Was it from off their garments, or was it the cord by which she had let them down?

Scarlet is a familiar emblem of regality. Rahab bound the bright color in her window in faith for her own salvation through the word of the spies, and in hope of the coming of her saviors. Its indelible hue, the color which arises from death, proclaimed the kingdom, for the crimson dye is due to the death of the little creature whence it comes, and may point to the blood of Jesus, whose kingdom shall be established in the virtue of His reconciling death. The scarlet was the silent witness of Rahab's faith, just as the expectation of Christ's kingdom should be the Christian's witness to Christ the coming One. Have we each one the scarlet cord in our windows? Does our Lord see that we, who trust in His blood, are indeed looking for His coming and His glory?

Her dwelling was on the wall, as far from the center of the city as possible-just the place for a believer who is in, but is not of, the world. Her house was the only place in the city of destruction where salvation could be had-just what should characterize the homes of those who look for Christ's kingdom. Her window faced out of Jericho, and the scarlet cord was bound in it-what should be true of the outlook of every house where Christ is known; its windows should not look toward the world, but toward the coming One....

Rahab showed her faith by her works. She spent her time in bringing in her nearest and dearest - her relations - none of them were left to perish in the overthrow. By her persuasion she brought them home to herself. Solemn lesson to those Christians who, while they say they know Christ is

coming, bestir not themselves for the salvation of sinners. One true test of our faith that Christ's coming may occur, we know not when, is our zeal for the immediate salvation of those whom we love. "Thou and thy house" is the divine word, and each believer's house should be a center of blessing.... If any man says he believes Christ may come this day, and is apathetic as to the salvation of souls, and especially as to that of those of his own household and circle, let him ponder over these words, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Jas. 2:26.

No message of mercy came to Jericho, and it is written, "Now is the judgment of this world" (John 12:31). No good news is sent now by God to the world as such, for Christ who came here has been cast out, and He is coming from heaven to judge the world. The gospel is "to every creature" in "all the world" (Mark 16:15), but not to the world as a system. All who believe are delivered from this present evil world's doom, are saved from its end, and delivered from the wrath to come. A false gospel inverts this truth, for it cries, "Make the world good, improve society, educate man up to holiness," and refuses to admit the fact that sinners need salvation out of this world, as did Rahab out of Jericho.

May God stir up His people, one and all, to faith in Christ's appearing and kingdom, and to the certain end of this world; and then there will arise real earnestness for the salvation of souls from the coming wrath! Wherever the reality of Christ's appearing and kingdom possesses the soul of a believer, that man is marked off from the rest as a Christian soldier. Toil on, labor on, he must. He is constrained to fill up these last priceless moments, which will so soon be over. Already the night is far spent, already the Morning Star shines in the hearts of His own; "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Heb. 10:37.

Upon the return of the two spies to the camp, they brought a good report to the people of Israel—that sort of soul-inspiring report which stirs up to energy for God. They spoke of victories yet to come: "Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us." Their hearts had melted like wax before the face of Israel. Strong faith makes strong hearts.

Forty years previously, the fainthearted spies had brought discouragement into the camp of Israel; they had judged by the testimony of their own eyes, and unbelief makes hearts to melt. The real state of the people of the land they knew not. This secret, hidden from Israel for forty years, because of their murmuring and unbelief, Rahab's words declare.

With what different eyes will two servants of the Lord look upon the same battlefield! One regards all as lost before the contest begins, seeing but giants, and cities walled to heaven; the other sees God. One regards himself as a grasshopper, and is frightened away from the field, and infects all he meets with the same fear; the other, strong by reason of faith, stirs up the courage of his brethren. The one sees the outside of the world's walls, and the brazen faces of its infidel giants; the other sees into the hearts of men, which, with all their talk, tremble at the thought of death and of the coming judgment.

What kind of spies are we? What is our testimony?

Faith Versus Unbelief

Numbers 27

The conduct of the daughters of Zelophehad, as recorded in the opening section of this chapter, presents a striking and beautiful contrast to the unbelief recorded in the previous chapter. They, most assuredly, belonged not to the generation of those who are ever ready to abandon divine ground, lower the divine standard, and forego the privileges conferred by divine grace. No; those five noble women had no sympathy with such. They were determined, through grace, to plant the foot of faith on the very highest ground, and, with holy yet bold decision, to make their own of that which God had given. Let us read the refreshing record.

"Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons. Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father." vv. 1-4.

This is uncommonly fine. It does the heart good to read such words as these at a time like the present, when so little is made of the proper standing and portion of God's people, and when so many are content to go on from day to day, and year to year, without caring even to inquire into the things which are freely given to them of God. Nothing is more sad than to see the carelessness, the utter indifference, with which many professing Christians treat such great and all-important questions as the standing, walk, and hope of the believer and the Church of God. It is not by any means, our purpose to go into these questions here. We merely desire to call the readers attention to the fact, that it is at once sinning against our own rich mercies, and dishonoring the Lord, when we evince a spirit of indifferentism in reference to any one point of divine revelation as to the position and portion of the Church, or of the individual believer. God, in the aboundings of His grace, has been pleased to bestow upon us precious privileges, as Christians. Ought we not to seek earnestly to know what these privileges are? Ought we not to seek to make them our own, in the artless simplicity of faith? Is it treating our God and His revelation worthily, to be indifferent as to whether we are servants or sons-as to whether we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us or not-as to whether we are under law or under grace-whether ours is a heavenly or an earthly calling?

Surely not. If there be one thing plainer than another in Scripture, it is this, that God delights in those who appreciate and enjoy the provision of His love-those who find their joy in Himself. The inspired volume teems with evidence on this point. Look at the case now before us in our chapter. Here were those daughters of Joseph-for such we must call them-bereaved of their father-helpless and desolate as viewed from nature's standpoint. Death had snapped the apparent link which

connected them with the proper inheritance of God's people. What then? Were they content to give up-to fold their arms in cold indifference? Was it nothing to them whether or not they were to have a place and a portion with the Israel of God? Ah! no, reader; these illustrious women exhibit something totally different from all this -something which we may well study and seek to imitate` something which, we are bold to say, refreshed the heart of God. They felt sure there was a portion for them in the land of promise, of which neither death nor anything that happened in the wilderness could ever deprive them. "Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he bath no son?" Could death, could failure of male issue, could anything, frustrate the goodness of God? Impossible. "Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father."

Noble words! words that went right up to the throne and to the heart of the God of Israel. It was a most powerful testimony delivered in the ears of the whole congregation. Moses was taken aback. Here was something beyond the range of the lawgiver. Moses was a servant, and a blessed and honored servant too. But questions arise with which he is unable to deal, as for example, the defiled men in chapter 9, and the daughters of Zelophehad in the section before us.

"And Moses brought their cause before the LORD. And the LORD spade unto Moses, saying, The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them." vv. 5-7.

Here was a glorious triumph in the presence of the whole assembly. A bold and simple faith is always sure to be rewarded. It glorifies God, and God honors it. Need we travel from section to section, and from page to page, of the holy volume to prove this? Need we turn to the Abrahams, the Hannahs, the Deborahs, the Rahabs, the Ruths of Old Testament times? or to the Marys, the Elizabeths, the centurions, and the Syro-phenicians of the New Testament times? Wherever we turn, we learn the same great practical truth, that God delights in a bold and simple faith-a faith that artlessly seizes and tenaciously holds all that He has given-that positively refuses, even in the very face of nature's weakness and death, to surrender a single hair's breadth of the divinely given inheritance. What though Zelophehad's bones lay moldering in the dust of the wilderness; what though no male issue appeared to sustain his name? Faith could rise above all these things, and count on God's faithfulness to make good all that His word had promised.

"The daughters of Zelophehad speak right." They always do so. Their words are words of faith and, as such, are always right in the judgment of God. It is a terrible thing to limit "the Holy One of Israel." He delights to be trusted and used. It is utterly impossible for faith to overdraw its account in God's bank. God could no more disappoint faith than He could deny Himself. He can never say to faith, "You have miscalculated; you take too loftily, too hold a stand; go lower down and lessen your expectations." Oh! no; the only thing in all this world that truly delights and refreshes the heart of God is the faith that can simply trust Him; and we may rest assured of this, that the faith that can trust Him is also the faith that can love Him, and serve Him, and praise Him.

Hence, then, we are deeply indebted to the daughters of Zelophehad. They teach us a lesson of inestimable value. And more than this, their acting gave occasion to the unfolding of a fresh truth which was to form the basis of a divine rule for all future generations. The Lord commanded Moses, saying, "If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his

daughter."

Here we have a great principle laid down in reference to the question of inheritance, of which, humanly speaking, we should have heard nothing had it not been for the faith and faithful conduct of these remarkable women. If they had listened to the voice of timidity and unbelief-if they had refused to come forward before the whole congregation in the assertion of the claims of faith-then, not only would they have lost their own inheritance and blessing, but all future daughters of Israel, in a like position, would have been deprived of their portion likewise.

Whereas, on the contrary, by acting in the precious energy of faith, they preserved their inheritance; they got the blessing; they received testimony from God; their names shine on the page of inspiration; and their conduct furnished, by divine authority, a precedent for all future generations.

Thus much as to the marvelous results of faith. But then we must remember that there is moral danger arising out of the very dignity and elevation which faith confers on those who, through grace, are enabled to exercise it; and this danger must be carefully guarded, against. This is strikingly illustrated in the further history of the daughters of Zelophehad, as recorded in the last chapter of our book. "And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the 'son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes the chief fathers of the children of "Israel; and they said, The LORD commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters. And if they married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance. And when the jubilee of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers. And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well." Numb. 36:1-5.

The "fathers" of the house of Joseph must be heard as well as the "daughters." The faith of the latter was most lovely; but there was just a danger lest, in the elevation to which that faith had raised them, they might forget the claims of others, and remove the landmarks which guarded the inheritance of their fathers. This had to be thought of and provided for. It was natural to suppose that the daughters of Zelophehad would marry; and moreover it was possible they might form an alliance outside the boundaries of their tribe; and thus in the year of jubilee-that grand adjusting institution-instead of adjustment, there would be confusion, and a permanent breach in the inheritance of Manasseh. This would never do, and therefore the wisdom of those ancient fathers is very apparent. We need to be guarded on every side in order that the integrity of faith and the testimony may be duly maintained. We are not to carry things with a high hand and a strong will, though we have ever such strong faith, but be ever ready to yield ourselves to the adjusting power of the whole truth of God.

"This is the thing which the LORD doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall

they marry. So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.... Even as the LORD commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad: for they [the five daughters] were married unto their father's brothers' sons: and they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father." vv. 6-12.

Thus all is settled. The activities of faith are governed by the truth of God, and individual claims are adjusted in harmony with the true interests of all; while, at the same time, the glory of God is so fully maintained, that at the time of the jubilee, instead of any confusion in the landmarks of Israel, the integrity of the inheritance is secured according to the divine grant.

Nothing can be more instructive than this entire history of the daughters of Zelophehad. May we really profit by it!

The Family Vault

It was some time after I had been born of God that I learned to draw the line between confessing my sins and reckoning myself dead. I used to search and search my own heart in the presence of the Lord, and bring to light everything that I could think of that I had thought, or said, or done amiss, own it all to Him and rest upon His promise - "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. Had I stopped there all would have been well, but still feeling the root of evil within, though I could remember no more offenses, I used to own it too before the Lord in all its vileness; and a sad trouble and constant source of annoyance it was to me, seeing that it never changed, and therefore always kept me on my knees confessing it.

At length the truth dawned on me that I was dead, that I had died at the cross (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:20), and that therefore all I had got to do was to think God's thoughts about myself, and hold, reckon, or account myself to be dead before Him.

Oh! what rest this was to my soul. Instead of probing and probing at this vile, this incorrigible heart, this fruitful source of iniquity, to look upon it as a dead thing that had no existence before God, and therefore no existence before me.

I remembered that the Israelites "saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore," but I could not recollect that they ever even turned the bodies over to make assurance doubly sure; so I determined to follow their example, and to look upon myself as one that had died at the cross with Jesus, and had been consigned with Him to the tomb, where I was resolved I would lie in faith until the Lord Himself should come to change my vile body into the likeness of His glorious body.

The tomb of Jesus then is my family vault. There, I, as I am by nature, repose, and the key is turned in the lock! I grant you, that ever and anon (for "we all often offend"; J.N.D. Trans.) there arises a fetid odor, telling of corruption within, and reminding me that faith must not go to sleep, but ever be on the watch lest the walls of this family vault should become impaired and let foul vapors out; but I have a precious corrective for this-my new man created after God in righteousness and true holiness, "not I, but Christ," who "liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20), in whom I stand before God, and walk before the world.

What a place we have, to be sure! To walk through the world yielding ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness. unto God.

The First Act in Canaan

Joshua 4

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Eph. 1:3.

Before the Jordan was crossed, Jehovah had bidden Joshua select "twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man" (3:12), in readiness for an action to be performed after traversing its empty bed. God purposed that a definite witness should be made by Israel to His wonders, and commanded that all the people, representatively, should be prepared in view of the action He had planned. When all the people were "clean passed over" Jordan, Joshua was bidden carry out this divine purpose; "Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night." Israel, by doing this, made acknowledgment through their representatives of what Jehovah had wrought for them. This action was performed, it must be borne in mind, when all of them were passed over into Canaan.

These stones proclaimed certain realities. Taken from the dry bed of the river, they declared God's power in cutting off the waters before the ark of His covenant; twelve in number, one stone for each tribe, they declared how that all Israel had entered into Canaan; set up together in Canaan, they witnessed to Israel's unity in that land. Moreover, they became a memorial to the nation of Jehovah's work for them.

First, these stones declared Jehovah's great work for His people; even Jordan emptied of its waters before the ark of His covenant, and His people brought thereby into the fullness of their blessing.

Now as we truly recognize that we are brought, in Christ, into the heavenly places, our first action in spirit will resemble that of Israel; we shall extol God for His power and might in accomplishing His purpose in bringing us into such blessing. And in order that this may be so, the Apostle prays that we may have the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened, so that we may know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe. Christ, our Ark, went down into death for us, exhausted its power, stripped it of its might; and God has given us, who were dead in sins, life "together with" Christ risen from among the dead, and has set us in Him in the fullness of blessing, so that as truly as Israel through the passage of Jordan were in Canaan, saints now are in Christ in the heavenly places.

To enter into this grace, it is necessary to keep before our hearts in faith the measure of God's divine power exercised toward us; the exceeding greatness of which is according to that energy and might of His "which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." Eph. 1:20. And speaking in the language of the type under our consideration as "clean passed over" Jordan, the Christian's first act should be the heart

recognition of what God has done. There should be the open acknowledgment that through the work of God all true Christians are seated in Christ Jesus in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:4-6). And, while we acknowledge that we are in the heavenly places, let us attribute the blessing to Christ alone, who went down into death for us. We are across the river, to God through Christ be the praise.

Next, the stones, twelve in number, "according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel" (vv. 5, 8), spoke of the whole of Israel. True, two and a half tribes had settled on the opposite side of the river, and but nine and a half had entered Canaan proper; yet nonetheless were twelve stones taken from the place where, on behalf of all, the ark had rested. God did not ordain that nine and a half stones should be set up in Canaan, and two and a half on the wilderness side of the river, according to Israel's attainment of possession; but He commanded the number that spoke of the whole nation to be set up, where, in His purpose, undivided Israel inherited and encamped (chap. 4:19, 20). His will was that a testimony should be rendered to His purposes for all His people Israel.

As God's people enter into His thoughts about His purpose, actions result which tend to His glory. We see this in the case of Elijah who nobly testified to Israel's oneness even in the days of the nation's apostasy, for in the very presence of the priests of Baal he built to Jehovah an altar of "twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob" (1 Kings 18:31). The prophet recognized the divine purpose as regards Jehovah's people, even when their actual state was apparently desperate. And in a like spirit the Apostle Paul, when before Agrippa, testified of the hope of Israel's "twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night" (Acts 26:7); yet as he thus spoke, ten of those tribes were scattered over the face of the earth, and two were guilty of the death of their Messiah! But the Apostle's standpoint was faith in God's purpose.

Further, the type teaches that the stones taken up out of the depths of the river were to remind Israel how that through the ark of the covenant standing in the bed of the Jordan for them, they had entered the promised land. God would have His saints ever maintain in their hearts the remembrance of Christ's death. The believer has died with Christ; he is also risen with Him, and ever should he remember what the Lord underwent in dying for him. Therefore, as risen with Him, and as being by His death delivered from our old condition, let us in strength divinely given, in the power of the Spirit, place upon our shoulders our stone from the bed of the river, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:10).

The stones set up together in Canaan were a monument to Israel's oneness, for their number was according to the twelve tribes; that is, of Israel as a whole. Christians occupy themselves practically with spiritual, not national, unity; therefore, with the truth that all saints of every nation are one in God's sight and according to His purpose. Saints are seated together in the heavenly places in Christ, the one common place of blessing for all who believe. One association and one privilege mark all saints, and all equally have the highest and the best place. Even as each individual believer has life for himself "together" with Christ risen (Eph. 2:5), so have all believers the highest privileges in common; they are by God made "to sit together" (v. 6).

The pillar of twelve stones set up in Gilgal, became a memorial to the nation of Jehovah's work for them. The question, "What mean ye by these stones?" which the children would ask their fathers was to be answered by a relation of the Lord's doings: "The waters of Jordan were cut off before

the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off." And well indeed may Christians recount to their children what God has wrought. Our little ones should be grounded in the great truths of God's Word. Redemption, resurrection, and ascension facts should be implanted in their minds and memories.

The pillar of stones of witness from Jordan's bed has long since been cast down; but, in the days to come, Israel's oneness in Canaan shall be seen by the whole world. The Christian's pillar of witness is the Word of God, and can never be removed. There stands the record that God's people are one family, one body. Upon that page is recorded indelibly the truth of all saints being one. Christ died, Christ rose again. Christ ascended to heaven; and for the honor and glory of His name, God has made all His people on earth one. In Christ the many are but one. Whatever the former differences were between Jew and Gentile, none are now recognized by God, but all saints are one in Christ. "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). The stones of our witness declare the fact; and, by recounting the work of the Lord, the souls of God's people are lifted up to the fact. The soul is elevated by declaring what God has done, and what His purposes are.

Once the Gentiles were fenced off from the Jews, but now the middle wall of partition is broken down in the cross of Christ. Christ Himself, the peace of all saints, has made both Jew and Gentile one. In His own flesh, on the cross, Christ abolished the enmity. He has made the two, separate and naturally antagonistic, in Himself into the one new man (Eph. 2:11-22). Let us go to the bed of the Jordan, where the feet that bare the ark of the covenant stood firm, and meditate upon God's ways. There is a wondrous power of uniting heart to heart in the consideration of Christ suffering for us all-in His making through His death His people into the one new man. Religious enmity, that awful element of dividing power, is slain by the sight of Jesus dying alike for all.

God's people are all risen with Christ, one saint as much as another; and in speaking of "risen" life, let us remember that the eternal life we each receive from Christ is received now from Him risen, and that all Christians have been quickened together by God with Christ. Again, all God's people are alike seated in Christ in heavenly places; there are not two platforms of blessings in Christ for saints, but that one only which is the highest and the greatest.

Beyond these things, the Holy Spirit of God, sent to the earth by our ascended Lord, has united every saint to Christ and, further, has united each to the other, and has made all in Christ one body, and all members one of the other, because all are members of Christ.

Whether some believers, like the two and a half tribes, settle down in spirit on the wilderness side of the river, or whether some, like the nine and a half tribes, make in spirit the heavenly Canaan their home, faith ever pitches the twelve stones in our Gilgal; for what Christ did in dying for us, He did for all saints. To allow for an instant that there is not "one body," would be to dishonor Christ who is the Head of the body; to assume that some saints are more of the one body than others, would be to deny the reality of the one body.

Any circle of interests, less than that of "all saints," is necessarily sectarian, such interests being confined to a part of God's whole. In what way then is practical oneness to be reached? What is the true power of unity among the members of the body of Christ? The Holy Spirit of God, who has formed all saints into the one body of Christ, has but one mind. He cannot think or act contrary to

Himself. Let the Spirit of God dwell in twice ten thousand saints of every clime and nation, and of every natural temperament and mode of thought, still He is the one Spirit. However diversified His ways, unity must of necessity mark them all. His varied actions result from His one will. Our loyalty to the truth of the personality of the blessed Spirit of God demands of us adhesion to the fact that His mind is but one mind.

There are not two spirits in the body of Christ-"There is one body, and one Spirit" (Eph. 4:4); and true, practical Christian union is of the Holy Spirit. He dwells in each believer, and so far as each member of the body of Christ is subject to and guided by the Spirit, he keeps the unity of the Spirit with his fellow believers. Each member of Christ should earnestly endeavor to maintain the one mind of Him who dwells in the children of God, "using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace." Eph. 4:3; J.N.D. Trans. Each believer is surely conscious of the existence in himself of self-will, and of there being in himself the germs of the various forms of insubjection to Christ, which tend to division in the camp, and to the separation of soldier from soldier; and, consequently, all should be more ready to blame themselves than others for the dishonor done to Christ's name by the divisions of God's people in Christendom. Were this the case, brighter hopes of unity might arise, for the principle whereby expressed unity is attained is a practical one. It lies in these words: "I therefore [because all saints are one-compare Eph. 3:1 and end of chap. 2 with chap. 4]... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called [the calling by God of His heavenly people from Jews and Gentiles into one] with all lowliness and meekness [having the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, who was meek and lowly of heart], with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love [walking as Christ walked, thus being graciously disposed one toward another]," earnestly "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Christlike character (lowliness and meekness) will produce Christlike behavior one toward another (long-suffering and forbearance in love); thus, in the mutual love, which is of God, in the uniting bond of peace, is the unity of the Spirit maintained. A holy state of soul, resemblance to Jesus Himself, and to His ways when on earth, alone is. walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.

The unity of the Spirit of God, truly kept by God's people is only to be arrived at by dependence of soul on God, day by day, hour by hour. If the Spirit of God be ungrieved in two saints, they will be keeping together the unity of the Spirit; and if two thousand act likewise, they also will be doing so, and will be walking in obedience to the Scriptures. The world values appearances, and thinks much of uniformity, of regimental action, of the maintenance of a creed, or of terms agreed to and obeyed, affecting an outward unity; but, for the keeping of the unity of the Spirit of God, for the maintenance of the indivisible one-mindedness of the blessed One who dwells in all saints, His unhindered action is necessary, and His action produces Christlike ways and obedience to the Scriptures. Conformity to the Spirit of Christ, or distance from it, marks our individual nearness to, or distance from, our keeping of the unity of the Spirit.

"What mean ye by these stones?" What mean ye by this mighty power of God in drying up the waters of Jordan before you, in the work of God in raising up Christ from the dead? Such questions will be best answered by the evidence of lives lived not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. The stones stood in Gilgal, which was Israel's place of power.

First Years of Christianity: How the Lord Jesus Regarded the Scriptures

We have seen how the Lord answered the devil's common temptations entirely by the Scriptures, as the Word of God. And it is striking that as to similar attacks of the devil, men generally use their own reason, power, and will, and never think of turning to the Word of God for an "It is written." It is also further remarkable that in each of these cases the Lord turns, to the writings of Moses, as the Word of God—the very writings especially attacked by modern ignorant infidels. These far-seeing men in darkness tell us that they are not the writings of Moses, but were written hundreds of years after him. Let us hear Him of whom God said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"—He who alone could say, "I am the truth."

To the healed leper He said, "Go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded" (Matt. 8:4). He appeals also to the words of Moses in the matter of divorce: "Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female.... For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" And what these words of Moses teach, He regards as of God. "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder," etc. The whole context proves that the Lord owned the words to be of and by Moses. And the Pharisees acknowledged the truth of this (Matt. 19:3-8). See also Mark 1:44, "And offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." "For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother," etc. This Jesus regarded as the commandment of God (see Mark 7:9, 10). To the Pharisees on another occasion He said, "What did Moses command you?" (Mark 10:3). "Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham" (Mark 12:26-31). "They have Moses and the prophets....If they hear not Moses and the prophets" (Luke 16:29, 31). "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). Thus, Moses and all the prophets are declared to be the scriptures by the risen Son of God. "And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45). Do we need any clearer proof than the plain teaching of Christ? "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Let us agree with Philip, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write" (vs. 45).

Jesus constantly refers to facts recorded in the books of Moses. He says, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14). "For 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). "Did not Moses give you the law?... Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision" (John 7:19,22). Such is the uniform teaching of Christ. Thus the puerile attempts to repudiate the authorship of Moses, or the inspiration of Moses (the law), the

psalms, and the prophets—as God truly speaking to us by them—is a wicked attempt to make Jesus a liar and a deceiver. My soul, be thou found with Him, the light and life and the truth, and not lost in the wanderings of modern thought.

The teaching of the Holy Spirit, in the Acts and the epistles, is equally decisive. “For Moses truly said unto the fathers.” And the words of Moses are “the covenant which God made with our fathers.” “Which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21-26).

Can we say of any other writings that God has spoken to us by those writings? No, assuredly no! This is the true sense of inspiration. God has spoken to us in the Holy Scriptures—and Moses is spoken of first. “For Moses truly said unto the fathers,” etc. This is what we must understand by inspiration: God using men to convey His very words to us. What a privilege to be thus brought into direct contact with God.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by [or in] His Son” (Heb. 1:1-2). Thus all Scripture was in the beginning owned as the very Word of God; as such it was quoted by the Son of God, and as such was always regarded by the inspired apostles. Harken to Paul; “But 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.... For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” (1 Thess. 2:4-13). So he exhorts Timothy to continue in the things which he had learned. “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. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:15-16). Therefore the closing words of Paul to Timothy are these, “Preach the word.” For the time would come, and now is, when they will not endure sound doctrine.

Peter also says, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.” It is not merely of man's ability. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Oh, how dignified then was the Lord's answer to the devil, “IT IS WRITTEN.”

Let us then beware of appealing to any authority, but to the Word of God. Now, as God did not speak to us in our own tongue, it is of the utmost importance that we should have the best and most literal translation — and that we should not add, or take from, for even one word would often alter the entire sense. There can be no compromise on this question. To give up one verse, or one thought, which God has spoken to us, is to give up all, and set up ourselves as God. In no other way can we meet the attacks of the devil than by appealing by faith to “It is written,” in the Word of God.

It is also important to remember, that the New Testament is regarded equally as the Word of God with the Old. (See 2 Pet. 3:16; Rev. 22:18-19.) Also Paul says to the Corinthians, “What! came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? 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” (1 Cor. 14:36-37). Where can our souls rest with calm security amid the confusion and contradictions of these last days, if we could not go back to that which was in the beginning, to the very words of God to our souls?

To bring down the inspiration of the Scriptures then to the level of Milton, or Shakespeare, or any mere man, is to reject the revelation which God in richest grace has been pleased to give us. Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostles, quote the whole Old Testament as the Word of God. And as to themselves, the inspired writers of the New Testament, John sums up all in a few words, “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6). However men may in these days of development reject the Word of God, or treat it as a mere human imperfect book, or books, it is most certain that in the beginning every Christian received it, as it is, the very Word of God. If a man did not, he was not of God, but of the spirit of error. Is it not so now? By this simple test then we know, that whoever questions the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture, is himself assuredly in error. All this may seem a long digression, but since our only appeal will be to “It is written,” how vast is the importance of being well grounded in the fact, that what is written is the sure Word of God.

Now let us for a moment suppose the Bible to be withdrawn from this world, and every ray of light borrowed from the Bible. If such a thing were possible, what would be the condition of mankind? How would you answer the thousand questions that rise in your mind? How came this world, or this universe, into existence? We see in its existence proofs of infinite wisdom and power, but how came the things we see to exist?

Then what contradiction to that wisdom and power in the overwhelming scene of misery and death which covers the globe on which we live. How came this to be so? What could man say, except, I don't know! What means, and what is that terrible thing we call conscience?—that terrible remorse of the human mind, for having done the things it hates, or loves, which leave such a poisoned sting? And what is the remedy, and where is it to be found? The poor dark mind could only reply, I don't know. Will death end it? I don't know. Is there a future after death? I don't know. What is the future of this world, even here? What is your future? On all these subjects and thousands more, take away the Holy Scriptures, and man is left in total darkness. No God of love to speak to him. No Savior from the terrible despair. No comfort, no help here, or heaven hereafter. The only thing such a man could do, would be to say, with Voltaire, I wish I had never been born. Nevertheless, God did not leave the heathen without a manifestation of Himself, as we learn from Romans 1.

O young man, think of the end and aim and development of modern thought. Let it once get possession of you, and in the wretchedness of despair, as I have seen it, you may long in vain to be delivered from the poison you have' imbibed in the writings of modern unbelief, which after all is not modern. No, it is as ancient as the words of the tempter, “Yea, hath God said?”

God has spoken in His holiness; we will rejoice. Yes, He who said, “Let there be light,” has spoken. What would this globe have been without light? Just what it would have been morally if God had not spoken. Oh, the mighty power, oh, the eternal blessedness of the Word of God. I have known a dying man, by five words of Jesus, turned from a blaspheming infidel, to a happy believing child of God here, and in a few hours in heaven. Those words were “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” God grant that the reader may never reject that Book of books, that treasure of all treasures.

Well do I remember singing, when a youth, fifty years ago—

“The Word of God, the Word of truth,

Instruct our childhood, guide our youth,

Uphold us through life's middle stage,

And be the comfort of our age.”

Praise be to God, I have found it so. No, fellow believers, let us earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. It may possibly be asked, How am I. to know what was the faith once delivered to the saints? Let us then turn to the sure Word of God. May He grant us grace to reject everything concerning which we cannot, with our Jesus, say, “It is written.” What is written then let us turn and see.

First Years of Christianity: That Which Was From the Beginning

“That Which Was From the Beginning”

From the holy inspired writings of John we see the vast importance of holding fast that which was from the beginning. He says, “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father” (1 John 2:24).

These words do not refer to the past eternity, but the beginning of Christianity — to the manifestation of eternal life, the Incarnate Son of God in this world. If we go back to the beginning of all things, of the universe, that blessed Person was ever there. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” Distinct in Person, in eternity, yet truly God — with God, and was God. Ever in the beginning, never made or created; for “All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.” Life was not communicated to Him. “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1,3,4).

He then created the universe; “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist” (Col. 1:16-17). Such is He of whom we now speak, brightness of the glory of God.

He was in His own Person the beginning of Christianity; but Christianity did not truly begin until He died and rose from among the dead. This will be evident if we trace His wondrous history in the four gospels. He was truly man; but oh, how different His holy sinless humanity from our sinful fallen nature. “Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). According to the prophecies, which holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, He was announced at His birth as the Messiah, yet as Savior, Emmanuel, God with us. “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32). We shall find, however, that this forms no part of Christianity, and that His kingdom and earthly glory is yet future.

It is, however, important to see Him come in flesh, truly man, and presented to Israel as the Savior-Messiah-Jesus Christ. Let us be assured that not one jot or tittle of God's Word shall fail. As the Messiah, the wise men from the east came to worship Him, “Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.”

But how contrary to Jewish thoughts: He came in deepest humility. See the Creator of all things laid in a manger. Yes, and we will bow with those divinely guided strangers from the east, and worship Him. Whether laid in the manger, or nailed to the cross, or seated on the throne of glory, Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou, that every knee to Thee should bow.

And when He was born, the glory could return to this earth. It was not in a palace, but in a stable; for there was no room for Thee, dear Lord, in this world's inn. This event was not made known by angels to kings or princes, but to those humble shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. It was to them the angel of the Lord came, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. Yes, to these poor fearful shepherds did the angel say, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Heaven bore witness to the birth of the Messiah: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Born of a woman, under the law, the holy child Jesus, when the appointed day came, was presented to Jehovah in the temple. And the Holy Spirit had prepared a godly remnant to welcome Him, and own Him. "It was revealed unto him [Simeon] by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Hear the witness of this Israelite brought in by the Spirit at that very moment: "Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke 2:26-32).

But if heaven rang with praises, and the godly Simeons and the Annas gave this precious witness to the child Jesus, what a contrast in the growl of hatred from the powers of darkness. "And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born" (Rev. 12:4). The court of Herod is troubled at the tidings of the birth of the King, the Messiah. As the agent of Satan, Herod will surely seek to destroy the young child. The angel of the Lord directs the wise men to depart, and Joseph to arise and take the young child and His mother and flee into Egypt. "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem," etc.

Such are a few of the circumstances attending this great wonder, the incarnation of the Son of God. "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." He was the light of men. "The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man" (JND). "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not."

Behold Him "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions," at the age of twelve; "and all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." Yet they knew Him not.

Even His mother understood Him not, nor knew that He must be about His Father's business. Nothing more is recorded by the Holy Spirit for many years of His holy life except that He was subject to His mother and Joseph, and that He increased in wisdom and stature (or age) and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:51-52).

And here may we be kept from all the deadly error as to His being the Sin-bearer during those years. He must be shown to be the perfect One, who knew no sin, before He could be made sin for us on the cross. This was shown whether in the lowly place of retirement as the son of the carpenter, in sinless, perfect subjection, or, afterward, when presented to Israel.

Well might John the Baptist be surprised when the Son came to him to be baptized. “John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?” Yes, it was consistent for Him in deepest humiliation to identify Himself with the godly baptized remnant of Israel. We must notice, that this was John's and not Christian baptism. “And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered Him.”

But had He sins to confess? Was He the Sin-bearer then, bowed beneath the wrath of God? Such a thought destroys the true character of His future atonement for sins. No; “Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Such was He to whom John pointed, and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” He was spotless purity itself, the Lamb without blemish. The heavens were not more holy than He; they were open to Him. The Holy Spirit of God could descend on Him. No spot or stain could the eye of God see in Him. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I AM WELL PLEASED.” Blessed Jesus! may we share the delight of the Father in Thee.

The three temptations of the devil could find no response in Him. The Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is for the first time revealed at the baptism of Jesus, the Incarnate Son, anointed with the Holy Spirit. He is now led forth to meet the power of the devil. Let us never go forth to meet that fallen one, without the fullest dependence on the same Holy Spirit. It may be observed here, that all error is a denial or an attack on the truth; yea, on Him who is the truth. To say that the devil is a mere evil principle, or our evil nature, would be to attack Christ, and make Him a fallen being with an evil nature like ourselves. No, the devil is clearly a real person of great power and subtlety.

How distinctly truth is manifested in the Word of God. We have the heavens opened to a man, and that Man the Son, the beloved Son. The Father speaks from heaven to Him. The Spirit descends on Him. Behold the second Adam. The devil overthrew the first Adam in paradise; he has no power to overcome the last Adam in the wilderness—yes, truly man, and in grace entering into human circumstances of fasting and hunger for forty days and nights.

With a doubt the devil attacked the woman, and a presentation of something good to the eye. Very similar the first temptation to our Lord. “If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Is it possible? canst Thou be the Son of God, and in such circumstances as these? so faint and hungry? Put forth Thy power, and at my bidding command these stones to be made bread. The devil pretends to seek the good of this hungry sufferer. Alas, we might have suspected no devil, and no sin behind this plausible temptation. Yes, we might say, That is a good thing; let us use our power to turn stones into bread, and thus relieve our sufferings. Mark, this was not a question of the ten commandments. The obedience of Christ consisted in only doing the Father's bidding. He must have, as the obedient Man, a word from God His Father for all He did. The Holy Scriptures of God have now their place. Jesus answered the devil, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Yes, the devil may tempt Jesus, to meet His need by His own will and power, or to do some great thing to become popular, and to show Himself the Son of God, at the devil's bidding; or he may present the world to Him; but “It is written” is the answer of the Lord to every temptation. What an amazement would

Christendom be in today, if even every Christian was to inquire if it be written for everything he is doing. Suppose we try it, beginning on a Lord's day and look to Him that we may do nothing for which we cannot find an "It is written." Now as this stands so prominent in the very opening of His ministry, let us next inquire how the Lord regarded the Holy Scriptures.

The Girded Servant

John 13

What a page is this that now lies before us, full of the richest grace of the blessed Lord, and at the same time, abounding with instruction which the people of God in their wilderness journey find and prove to be indispensable. Forever be adored the God of all grace, who not only has met our need as sinners, in the sacrifice of His Son, but, who also in the same blessed One is meeting the need of His beloved people traversing a scene of defilement where temptation and trial abound. And what exquisite grace on the part of the Lord Jesus to give us, in the act of washing His disciples' feet, a token of His unchanging love, when He would be away in the glory, and we left to testify of Him in the world, as well as a specimen of His ministries for us in the presence of God, as He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." What a proof that He ever thinks of us, and cares for us, in all our path of trial through this world! He is now on high for us, the glory-girded Servant.

On the cross, the work that has effected our, cleansing was done forever; the sacrifice was offered "once" never to be repeated. And those to whom the blood is applied, are "perfected forever" according to its infinite value; the blood is never said to be applied again.

But the work of the blessed Lord, in the presence of God for us, will not cease till He has taken us to Himself. While any part of the Church is here in the place of testimony, His work will go on for them on high, as the "minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:2). If the Lord has sat down forever, as touching His sacrificial work (Heb. 10:12), He has not ceased His ministries for us as our High Priest and as our Advocate, the One girded to keep us clean and in holy communion with God His Father and Himself. How this fact endears the blessed Lord to our hearts! How it bows the soul in the presence of such love that is never wearied of serving, and leads us to adore Him who has by virtue of His mighty sacrifice, and the indwelling of the blessed Spirit of God, linked us with Himself, and charged Himself with all our affairs, and has pledged His own word to bring us to Himself in the glory above.

What we have in this chapter is that which we have in view of the Lord's departure from the world to the Father. As the Lord "knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.... Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." John 13:1-5. By the words, "His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father," we learn that the Lord here contemplates His atoning work upon the cross as finished; as in John 17: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do"; and that now He has His services in the presence of God for His people before Him, keeping them clean from the defilement of the world - living to keep them clean - loving them unto the end.

How marvelously blessed is all this! For who has not more or less realized his own weakness and failure? Yet to be able to turn to that love which is unchanging, and find in that heart what sustains ours even in the time of conscious failure, is what must bow the soul before Him who loved us, in holy worship.

Peter's ignorance is made the means of bringing out the efficacy of the two-fold work of Christ: His work upon the cross, and His work as the ascended One. First, "He that is washed [or bathed] needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." The cleansing "every whit" has reference to the cleansing by the blood from all sin; and he that is thus cleansed, needs not to be so cleansed again, but, in virtue of that cleansing, stands before God in the full value of that blood that has rolled every sin belonging to the believer into the sea of God's forgetfulness. Nothing can possibly affect this cleansing; the believer is once cleansed, and cleansed forever. He is "accepted in the beloved." This is divinely precious, imparting perfect peace to the heart and conscience of every one that reposes by faith upon the work of Christ. Faith appropriates to the soul and its deep need, all the intrinsic and eternal perfection of that "once" offered and eternally accepted sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. It stands in the presence of a holy God in undisturbed peace, in the blessed consciousness of there being nothing against it - no spot within, no cloud above, no wrath in God's heart, no fear in it! And what is the secret of it all? It is clean every whit, according to God's own estimate of the precious blood of His dear Son.

"Clean every whit; Thou saidst it, Lord;

Shall one suspicion lurk? Thine, surely, is a faithful word,

And Thine a finished work."

This cleansing was effected by the "blood of the cross"; and as that blood was shed "once," so the application of it is "once for all." If otherwise, if it is to be applied again, the precious blood of God's Son is made to be no more than the blood of bulls and goats, which in itself would be blasphemy. But as the application is "once," those to whom it is applied are perfected forever, because of its eternal efficacy; they are clean every whit, according to the words of Christ.

In the second place, there is the washing of the feet, and that may take place continually. As in the case of the priests of old, they were washed once, when consecrated to the priesthood; and as touching their standing as priests, this was never repeated; but daily they had to wash their feet at the laver before entering upon the services of the tabernacle. And so with the Christian; although clean every whit as touching his standing and acceptance, he needs the application of the "water of the word" to keep him free from defilement, enabling him to go on in the service of the Lord in communion with Him. Hence the Lord's words to Peter, when he said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet" - "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." It is all-important to notice that the Lord did not say, "Thou hast no part in Me, or I in you," but, "Thou hast no part with Me." That is to say, there can be no communion with the Lord in the way of service if this daily washing of the feet is neglected. It may be blessedly true that we are cleansed by the blood, and that no charge can be laid against us, and at the same time we may know but very little of what it is to have part "with" Christ. For this we need to know the blessed services of Christ above for us, opening our hearts to the cleansing application of the "word," and so retaining priestly energy in our souls, going on in communion with Christ-having part with Him.

Then, again, the blessed Lord not only gave us to understand that He was going away to exercise this holy, unwearied love on our behalf, but He would give us to see that He would have us with Himself in this service, as He said: "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

Now this is not merely an expression of humility, but rather the exercise of holy love that can never allow any evil. The blessed Lord exercises it above; and when any of His people fail, He applies the water of the Word by the Spirit, as shown in the act of washing the disciples' feet, and in this scripture: "Christ... loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25, 26). Communion is suspended when defilement is contracted, and restored when it is cleansed away. But the Lord would have us in fellowship with Himself in this work-washing "one another's feet" - exercising the same holy, jealous love over each other; and this is no mean service to take part in. But is it merely humility? It is humility of the purest kind, but something more. It is the holy faithfulness of that love, which is in the fullest fellowship with Christ, about an erring brother-one defiled. And oh, what a service to be engaged in! We need, indeed, to eat the "sin offering in the holy place." None but those who are spiritual - those in full communion with the Master -can restore an erring brother. Alas! how often we are unable to wash one another's feet! Instead of cleansing them, we often make them the more defiled by our spiritual incapacity to wash them. How often we: do, by our own want of self-judgment, deprive ourselves of the privilege of washing "one another's feet." Do we pass over a brother's or our own failure? That is neither love to ourselves nor him. That is neither washing his feet, nor opening up our own hearts and consciences to the application of that word that Christ uses to wash ours. His love cannot bear the thought of defilement resting upon the least of His people. His heart will not allow this distance from Himself, necessarily caused by the failure. He must use the rod to effect His purpose. This is often terrible work for the one upon whom it is laid. Holy love strikes the blow; and then heals up the wound. The hand that plunges the sword of the Spirit into the conscience, to make it sensible of the sin allowed, is that which applies the balm to the wound when repentance is wrought and confession is made. We may treat failure lightly, but He cannot. And why? Because He loves us, and because it cost His precious blood-shedding to put it away.

What then? Let us walk in the spirit of self-judgment, of prayer, and of watchfulness, allowing the Word of our God to have full power with our own hearts and consciences; walking before Him who judges righteously; submitting to His gracious will; adoring Him for His constant love; abiding in communion with Him; having full part with Him; obeying His injunctions; and so be spiritually capacitated to wash each other's feet, the result of the exercise of holy love.

Gleaning

To meet the Lord in the air - what a volume in those words! Nothing can give cheerfulness in the thought of treading a path never trod before, but the Lord Himself being there - meeting Him there.

The hope of the Lord's coming is a divine hope, centered in Himself; not only rejoicing in hope of the glory of God - more than that - waiting for Christ Himself, who, being now in the very highest of glory as Son of man in the glory which He had with God before the world was, will come forth from that glory to take us up. How are your hearts affected in regard to the thought of this Christ of God not only coming to throw open the Father's house, but coming Himself to be our joy? Can you say that the longing of your heart is flowing forth in the invitation continually ascending, "Come, Lord Jesus"? That blessed One has it in His heart to come, and if He speaks and says, "Surely I come quickly," have such words, dropping from His lips, the continual answer in your heart, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"?

Gleaning

If you are not walking in practical holiness, you will be made to find it out in chastening. He cannot separate between the Head and the members, but He looks at our ways. The Lord is sanctifying us, body, soul, and spirit. What! is this corruptible body to be put apart for God? Yes! whether I eat or drink, or, whatever I do, all is to be for the glory of Christ. Are all the affections of my heart, all the thoughts of my mind, to be put apart? Yes; as a member of Christ, I have to walk in childlike faith, most watchful not to commit Christ to anything unlike Himself, because of being in vital union with Him. I may be but a hair of the head, the tiniest member, but God has blessed me with all spiritual blessings in Him; and being so blest, ought I not to walk accordingly - holy and without blame before Him in love?

G.V.W.

Glorified in His Saints

Then shall the Lord be glorified in His saints-not as now, in their obedience and service, their holiness and fruitfulness, but in their personal beauty. Arrayed in white, and shining in our glories, we shall be the wondrous witness of what He has done for the sinner that trusted in Him. And as one much loved and honored in the Lord has just written to me, so I write to you, beloved: "No lark ever sprang up on a dewy morning to sing its sweet song with such alacrity as you and I shall spring up to meet our Lord in the air." And his exhortation to me, I would make mine to you (though feebly echoed from my heart): "O my brother, set it before your mind's eye as a living reality, and then let hope patiently wait for, the fulfillment." "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The Good Shepherd and the Sheep

John 10

The more we study the ways of the Lord Jesus, the more we shall find what is unfathomable in goodness and beauty. In, this chapter, what extremes meet in reference to Him! What power, and yet what submission! There are heights of moral glory, and yet depths of humiliation. He presents Himself as the Son of God, and yet He enters in by the door, and has the porter opening to Him.

The Person of the Lord Jesus will always afford food for our souls, if we study Him; and while we shall be humbled by it, we shall be strengthened with the consciousness that all that He is, He is for us. The heart delights in Him as one it can feel as its own, and yet admire and adore.

At this time the Lord had been fully putting Israel to the test. Chapters 8 and 9 show us how entirely He was rejected. In chapter 8 His word is rejected, and in chapter 9. His works. Thus the result of His coming is, that He is cast out; and He says, "For judgment I am come into the world"; and because of their treatment of Him they were culpably guilty. "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now, ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." Then He as much as goes on to say, Not one bit of it is in vain. He has come as He ought, and in the prescribed way, "by the door"; and God would own and make good His coining, though He was rejected and set at naught. All His sheep should come to Him, and He could say, "I have spent My strength for naught and in vain, and yet surely My judgment is with the LORD, and My work with My God." If He had come acknowledged as a king in glory and power, He would have had many follow Him; but now, though He was the lowly and despised One, He would have all who really wanted Him. "He that entereth not by the door, but climbeth up some other way, is a thief and a robber." All these great messiahs, setting up to be someone (and there are plenty of them), were no better than "thieves and robbers." We see at once here who it is that comes in by the door, and the first thing we find in Him is absolute submission; and notice that this, though true of the Shepherd primarily, is true also of all who follow the Shepherd. All power and real effective service will be found to spring from entire submission.

There was entire rejection for Jesus, as He said, "Dogs have compassed Me," and again, "My bones are out of joint, My heart is like wax." It was a painful thing thus to be met -everything deepening and darkening toward death as He passed along; but He went through it all, and thus entered in by the door in perfect submission. Those who found Him must be brought into the same place too, for it was there He found them. See the blind man; where did he find Him? In the place of his rejection. Christ is before him when they "cast him out." There is not one such poor sheep whom His voice cannot reach. He meets souls just where they need Him; in distress or difficulty, no matter what, He suffers Himself for them. He went in by the door, and He was the true Shepherd - not of Israel, indeed, for they as a people rejected Him, but He is the Shepherd of the sheep - of all whose consciences and hearts were touched. He is "the shepherd of the sheep." Does He use His power in claiming them for Himself? No! He is the submissive One coming in perfect dependence on God. Thus, when Lazarus was dead, He did not move until He had_ a

word from God to do it. He took the form of a servant, and a servant must be dependent and obedient.

"To Him the porter openeth." "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it He was here in complete humiliation, and this was His perfectness as man. God, His Father, does not spare Him the suffering, but He opens the door. As a fact, He has come, and the sheep hear His voice. Though trodden upon by the goats in the way, He does not care for it, but goes after the sheep; and the sheep know that He cares for them. They understand that He has an interest in them, for they "hear his voice." Why did He bear all the contempt poured upon His words and works, Son of God as He was? It was for the sake of the sheep. He 'was content to bear the trampling of 'the goats for the sake of the sheep among them.

Then, again, there is perfect ability in Him to deliver them. He is not going to leave them among the goats. No; "he leadeth them out." He draws their hearts; He makes Himself known to them, and charges Himself with their safety and deliverance. "He goeth before them." "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them." What then? are there no dangers and difficulties in the way? With Israel, when brought out of Egypt, and over the sea, were they in no danger of losing their way? Yes; but there was the cloud to guide them. Was there no danger from enemies in the way? Yes; but there was the captain of Jehovah's host. So now with His sheep; He leads them out, and does not leave them. He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him. See what certainty is found here.

Persons may make this remark or that; but if I know it is Christ's voice, it is enough for me. "Let us go forth therefore to Him without the camp." It is not now for me to remain in the Jewish fold. "He leadeth them out." But some will say, How do you know it is not your own will you are following? It says, "They know his voice." The sheep know the voice of Christ, and if they have not got His voice, they stop until they have. There is one voice they know. There are plenty of other voices, but they do not know them. Sheep are silly, stupid creatures; but they know the shepherd's voice-that one voice. The moment Christ's voice has reached me, it is enough; and this gives a peace and quietness in one's path that nothing else does. It is not great wisdom or great strength that gives this, but it is hearing the Shepherd's voice and knowing it. If not the Shepherd's voice, it is dreaded. "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him." The Shepherd does not frighten. He gives strength and confidence; and, His voice having once reached the heart, nothing else is needed. This is when the eye is single. If double, a man is unstable in all his ways - not in one, but in all.

Never was divine love so shown forth as in Christ coming down so low; and it was because He is what He is, that He could do it. If Adam left his first estate, it was sin; but Christ could humble Himself, and it was the perfectness of love. While He entered in Himself by the appointed way, He is the door - the entrance to the way for everyone else.

They would not, as Jews, have been warranted in leaving the Jewish fold, if Christ had not come as the door into another thing. He was the warrant, and so with us. By Him we may come out and enter in and find peace and blessing. What marks the sheep is that Christ is their door. He is the door for the sheep. They could not say they were saved, because Jews, though they had God's oracles and much advantage every way; it was only by Christ they could be saved. Mark, it says, "If any man enter in, he shall be saved." It does not say, if they follow on well, but if they "enter in."

There must be the real hearing the voice of the good Shepherd. If he enters in, he is saved; and he cannot enter in without being saved. Then there is a path to follow, doubtless; but that is the result of being saved. We shall find it difficult oftentimes, Satan tripping us up, the world and the flesh; but the door is to "go in and out" by. There is liberty of heart. I can go out into the world to testify of Christ, because my soul is in the safeguard of Christ Himself - not pent up in ordinances, nor in monasticism. There is food also, and they "find pasture." They enjoy all the truth of God's Word.

Christ's sheep thus have safety too. "None can pluck them out of My Father's hand." They have liberty, "go in and out," and they have all the food God can give. They "find pasture," and what more will they have? They will have the glory by-and-by.

Then He contrasts Himself with all these false teachers that have gone before, and says of Himself, "I am come that they might have life." Not content with giving life only, He gives it "more abundantly"; as in Romans, "They that receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ." Here we serve in life; then we shall reign in life. What liberty, what abundance of all things it gives, when we see that He is our life! He gives life more abundantly. Cost what it will, He is intent on saving them. "He giveth his life for the sheep." As though He said, I am devoted to you, and I am determined to get you out of this wretched place in which you are; I will get you out, cost what it will. "I am the good shepherd, and I lay down my life for the sheep." He has so given His sheep life,

and now He will give all that they want in life. (See the contrast of these hireling shepherds.) It might be said, if He has given His life for them, He can do nothing more. But no! it is not so with Him. See verse 14: "I know my sheep and am known of mine." There is not only caring for the flock as a whole, but for the individual sheep - "and am known of mine." Paul knew He "loved the church, and gave Himself for it"; and he knew also that He loved him, and gave Himself for him. Then there is as true a relationship of love between Christ and the sheep now, as there is between Him and His Father (vv. 14, 15).

Further, "There shall be one flock, and one shepherd." Jew and Gentile were to be brought into the Church of God.

"Therefore doth My Father love Me," He says, "because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." This shows the wonderful value of the work done. It is a motive for the Father's love! Yet, however low He might go, even to laying down His life, He could take it up again. He had power [title or authority] to do it, but He was in the place of obedience. "This commandment have I received of My Father." He had power, but He was the obedient servant. What a difference there is between Him and us! We could not take up our lives again, if we laid them down. It was in virtue of His divine title and power, as well as love, that He came so low for us.

Verse 19 (and downward) shows us the different way in which the Jews heard and received His sayings to what His sheep do. Christ's voice has power in the heart, and this is the secret of the difference between them and the goats.

And, again later on, see the full security and extent of blessing they have in virtue of the Shepherd's title and power. "I give unto them eternal life." It is a life that is eternal, not that which is to be taken away again. Whoever has heard Christ's voice has eternal life. It must be eternal life that Christ gives; for if one of His sheep could perish. Christ must perish. And it must be a holy life

too that He gives, for the same reason. What Christ gives must be holy, for He is holy. "They shall never perish." A sheep is a perishing thing, but His sheep do not perish. We may fall asleep, or we may be changed; but the same life that we have now in Him and with Him, we shall have then at His coming. There are two points in which this blessed security consists. First, Christ is in them, as their life; second, "None shall pluck them out of My hand." They are in His hand. The Father has given us to Christ, and He is to do the work for us. The Father's love is concerned, and He is able to do it all. You must get someone more powerful than God, if you can be plucked out of His hand. The Father sent the Son, and the Son has sent the Spirit, so that all three are concerned in our salvation.

There is then salvation, and eternal life for the sheep; but how are we to know who are the sheep? They are those who know His voice. How sweet the thought that, as the Shepherd, He leads them all the way! It is hearing Christ's voice that distinguishes the Christian, though there are sorrows and troubles, difficulties and perplexities. Hearing Christ's voice has absolute authority and power for him, "perplexed but not in despair."

How wonderful that He should have thus come down to let us hear His voice! How precious here to be taught that Jesus and the Father are one, that the glory of the Son's Person is identified with the security of the sheep, both against inward weakness and outward violence, as it is with the height and depth of the love of which the sheep were the objects! The Father and the Son are one in divine essence, as they are in efficacious love to the sheep.

The Good Shepherd Gave His Life: David Risked His

David was a shepherd and had a shepherd's heart. One day, as he faithfully kept his father's sheep, a lion came and took a lamb out of the flock. This stirred David's heart and he "went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him." 1 Sam. 17:35. Thus David risked his own life to save one little lamb of his father's flock. It was helpless against a mighty lion; but David, in the power of God, was mightier, and delivered the lamb.

The Good Shepherd, of whom David was but a type, also kept His Father's sheep. He said, "My Father... gave them Me." They too had a mighty foe, the roaring lion, and needed deliverance; this the Good Shepherd was prepared to accomplish, but to do so He had to give His life. The mighty "roaring lion" roared against Him in the garden of Gethsemane, but He resisted unto blood. There He weighed what it would be to be made sin, what it would cost Him to deliver those helpless, but guilty, sheep and lambs. He took the bitter cup as from His Father's hand, and came forth serenely to meet an armed mob.

This blessed One had said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." John 10:11. Nothing short of death would meet their need and deliver the sheep; in order to save them He must go all the way into death. This He did on that center cross on the hill called Calvary; in those three terrible hours of darkness He suffered for the sins of the guilty sheep, and then went down into death in order that He might overcome that mighty foe who had the power of death, and deliver the sheep "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15).

"His be 'the Victor's name'

Who fought the fight alone;

Triumphant saints no honor claim,

His conquest was their own.

"By weakness and defeat

He won the meed and crown,.

Trod all our foes beneath His feet

By being trodden down."

And now as the blessed result, He gives the sheep "eternal life"; and He Himself has said, "and they shall never perish." What glorious fruit of the work of the Good Shepherd-eternal life! never perish! He who gave Himself for the sheep has pledged Himself for their safety; that is, He holds them securely in His hand, where none can ever seize them. And more than that: "My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man [literally, "no one - man or devil] is able to

pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one." John 10:29, 30. The Owner and the Shepherd of the sheep are one. What security!

A Goodly Heritage: Pleasant Places

This psalm presents the Lord Jesus Christ in the place of self-emptied and absolute dependence. "Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee do I put My trust." This was His attitude from the manger to the cursed tree. He never for a single instant ceased to depend on God. His heart never once cherished a creature expectation-an earthly hope.

Hence, He could at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances, say, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places." They might not be smooth places or sunny places, or places agreeable to flesh and blood; but faith, a confiding heart, a subject will, a dependent spirit, could always say they were "pleasant." He might be misunderstood, misinterpreted, accused of being mad, of having a devil; He might be maligned, despised, rejected, betrayed, denied, deserted, spit upon, buffeted, mocked, cast out - yet in the face of all He could say, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Yes; "pleasant" and "goodly" were the words which the blessed Lord used to describe His "lines" and His "heritage," though He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53).

And how was this? Just because God filled the entire range of His vision. His outward circumstances, as looked at from nature's point of view, would not by any means appear to have, been either "goodly" or "pleasant." His path was not strewn with roses. It was a desolate, rough, dreary path, so far as earth was concerned. The foxes and the fowls were better off than He. The very beasts of the forests and the fowls of the air had what the Creator of heaven and earth had not. He had not where to lay His head. There was no rest for Him. He could not enjoy many sunny hours in a dark world like this. Earth did not afford Him a single green blade, a single refreshing spring. He was a debtor to a poor Samaritan adulteress for a drink of water in His hour of weariness. The women that came up with Him, from the despised Galilee, "ministered unto Him of their substance." This world had naught for the heavenly Man, save the manger, the crown of thorns, the vinegar, the gall, the spear, the borrowed grave. Yet, notwithstanding all, He could say that His "places" were "pleasant," and His "heritage" was "goodly."

Christian reader, these are the words of your Great Exemplar - of Him who has left you an example that you should follow His steps. So then, do you feel and acknowledge that the lines have fallen unto you in pleasant places, and that your heritage is a goodly one? To answer this, you are not to look within or around. Your reply is not to take its shape from the circumstances or the influences, the men or the things, with which you may happen to be surrounded. You must look straight up into heaven, for there, and there alone, properly speaking, are your "lines"; there is your "heritage." Your lines are fallen within the "many mansions" of your Father's house on high, and you have received as your heritage "a kingdom which cannot be moved." You are provided for, forever. You can never want any good thing. Christ is your portion, heaven your home, glory your everlasting destiny. The love that has stooped to pluck you as a brand from the burning, has clothed you with a robe of divine righteousness and will, ere long, crown you and make you a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out forever.

Well, therefore, may you speak of "pleasant places" and "a goodly heritage." True, your path down here may be rough and thorny - you may be tried by ill health, poverty, bereavement, sorrow, pressure, personal infirmity, and various other circumstances - but then remember, your lines are fallen to you in "heavenly places"; your heritage is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and... fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," while at the same time you are "kept by the power of God," in the midst of those very trials, "through faith unto salvation." "The LORD is the portion of Mine inheritance and of My cup: Thou maintainest My lot." This was enough for the heart of Jesus. He needed nothing more. He found His all in God, and there He rested.

Then as to His hope, what was it? "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." In these words are wrapped up one of the most profound and precious truths which can possibly engage our attention; namely, that the body of the Lord Jesus came forth from the tomb bearing the marks of an accomplished atonement, and yet, without the smell of mortality having passed upon it. The foul breath of corruption never reached His pure, holy, sinless, spotless flesh. This is a vital, fundamental truth - a sublime mystery of our most holy faith. The perfect humanity of the eternal Son of God "tasted death," and yet "saw no corruption." The soul that denies this must be a total stranger to all spiritual communion with the Person of the Son. He has yet to be divinely taught that all-important truth which lies at the very base of the "great... mystery of godliness"; namely, that "God was manifest in the flesh."

Oh! that the Church of God may drink into the spirit, realize the power, and enter into the practical results of this cardinal truth. It is much to be feared that the mysterious Person of the God-man does not occupy the thoughts and command the affections of the saints as He should. There is far too much looseness and inaccuracy both in reference to His Person and His work. Hence, the fearful prevalence of carnality and worldliness.

O Lord, revive Thy work!

Grace From Above

Unless the full grace of God has its place in the souls of Christians, they never can walk with God in the power of that grace. If the least thing of self comes in, it is all over with the joy and liberty in which free grace enables a believer to walk. If grace be the groundwork, it does not give way; if I have failed (whatever may be the character of my failure), the light in which it comes out to be judged, gives my soul a fresh start to go on again with God. It is a solemn question whether I am holding fast to free grace.

You may be saying, "Ah! I shall never get through this week without a fall or a spot on my garments"; but rather say, "Let me not talk of my difficulties; there is One up there going before them all, One who sees Satan, the world, and myself, and meets all for me. He can bring me through to the end of this week, as He did through the last. He ever lives; is He not competent to give me a fresh start onward, and fresh strength? And if I am not able to walk, He goes before to move difficulties out of the way. Yes, He is just the One for me to lean on through this week."

A Great Calm

The 4th chapter of the Gospel by Mark contains, in verses 26-29, a parable or similitude of the kingdom not mentioned by the other evangelists. Following as it, does upon the parable of the sower and the Lord's exposition of it to His disciples, and bearing in mind that this Gospel presents our Lord Jesus Christ as the Servant-Prophet, the Minister of the Word, we shall see that these verses serve, if one may so speak, to maintain the spiritual sequence of the first part of the chapter with the last scene upon the lake, concerning which it is upon my heart to say a few words.

We have, first, in the parable of the sower, the new place the Lord takes consequent upon His rejection; that is, One bringing that which has life in it, instead of seeking fruit from men. The explanation follows, and then in the verses above cited there is an indication of what would succeed the time of seed-sowing by the Lord personally - that He would absent Himself from the scene of labor, and according to all appearance would not only take no active part in tending the seed, but so far as could be observed, would take no interest in it. It is as if He "should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." v. 27. Let us observe, in passing, the expression "sleep, and rise," for this thought seems to recur at the close of the chapter. The earth brings forth fruit of itself, but at harvest time the Lord personally reasserts His place, and puts in the sickle. So will it be at the end of the age. The, parable of the mustard tree follows, which develops the thought of what Christendom would become in the world during Christ's absence. Springing from the smallest of seeds, having the most circumscribed commencement, it would become great; as it is said, "greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches," so that the fowls of the air (the powers of evil; compare vv.. 4, 15) may lodge under the shadow of it.

Now this is what we find true today. Christendom has become a worldly power, and for faith there is oftentimes the deep exercise. Where is Christ in all this? What a comfort that when they were alone "He expounded all things to His disciples." If we cultivated communion more with Christ alone, we should understand His things better. The slackness is with us, never with Him (compare Psalm 73:16, 17).

The evening has now drawn on the close of the day of toil, and one cannot forbear the comparison that the day of seed-sowing and salvation is rapidly drawing to an end. What has the heart of the disciple to steady it in a world like this, which becomes a foreign element to him when he knows Christ? Oh! these blessed words, "Let us pass over unto the other side" (v. 35). What security they breathe! what joy! In spite of the fact that the world sees Him not, we see Him (John 14:19), and in all the confusion of the present moment, His Word strengthens the feeble, and claims the allegiance of all. "Let us pass over unto the other side." What room for fear in the hearts of the disciples if they had seen what the words implied? They meant that He charged Him self with their safety right over to the other shore. And yet they cry out in the presence of what appears danger with the unbelieving thought that He cared not if they perished!

Yes! but you may say He was asleep. Beloved reader, after that word, "Let us go," whatever happened, they were secure. It was only to sight and sense that He seemed to take no interest in their welfare, but neither the storms of life nor all the powers of evil can engulf us if we confide in Him. He slept, but at their cry He arose (compare v. 27), and rebuking the elements, the disciples see the power and love that was with them all the time, though they knew it not. "And there was a great calm" (v. 39). Is it too much to say that spiritually such a juncture as this occurs in each history? The power of death affrights the soul, but acquaintance with Christ's word and the knowledge of His presence quiets every fear for the journey. It is only in unbelief that He cares not. And when our hearts know Him thus, with us "all the days, until the completion of the age"

(J.N.D. Trans.), what fear can remain? Is there not "a great calm" in the soul?

O dear reader, do you know it? In the midst of all the dangers, the heaving and tossing and threatening of the billows, do you know that voice that speaks not only peace to the elements, but a great calm to the heart, by the same almighty power? The Lord give all His saints to know Him better in this way.

Guidance

Some of you have been exercised lately, I believe, about how you may know the will of God in matters of everyday life. It is a very blessed thing to acknowledge God in the very smallest detail of our lives.

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

Not only in the big undertakings, but in all the little things as well. God is deeply interested in them all, and He delights to be consulted by His children about all their doings. I am sure if we always "acknowledge" God, we would get on better and happier than we often do.

I knew a Christian girl, a dressmaker, who was one of those that consulted God about her everyday life. She had a hard employer to serve, and there were constantly difficulties cropping up about ladies' dresses in her daily employment.

"I just tell God about them," she said, "and it's wonderful the deliverances I receive. I ask His help and guidance in meeting with customers, and He always gives it."

No wonder she was kept peaceful and happy. I remember a young engineer telling me that every time he moved the handle of his engine to draw up men from the coal pit, he lifted up his heart to God for guidance; and by this means he was kept in dependence on God all the day long.

I know worldly people, and some Christians too, smile at this. They think it weak and childish; they would rather "use their wits" in these things. Very well, let them do so; one day they will come to their "wit's end," as the Bible says (see Psalm 107:27); then they will be cast on God.

In all things on which God has spoken in His Word, it is ours to obey promptly; but there are thousands of details in our daily lives for which we have no "chapter and verse" command, and in these, we are to "acknowledge" Him, seeking His guidance, and watching with single eye to see His hand open up a pathway for us. When you need a job, a suit of clothes, a seat on a plane, a parking space, tell God about it; everything is in His hand, under His control, and He can - and will if He sees fit - cause every created thing to serve His trusting saints.

Ask counsel of the Lord when you are in doubt, and faithful is the word,

"Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37:5.

He Oft Refreshed Me

Have you ever noticed the service of a brother named Onesiphorus? I believe it has a word for us in these days when many are isolated, and often are unable to meet with the Lord's people for fellowship.

The Apostles said of him in 2 Tim. 1:16-18, "He oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain.... He sought me out very diligently, and found me... in how many things he ministered unto me." What a lovely list of things are mentioned here, and how suggestive surely to any whose heart is, filled with the love of Christ!

"He oft refreshed me"-like a morning breeze, full of freshness and vitality, this dear man had often refreshed the heart of the great Apostle. Although Paul may at times have been cast down, here was one who had ministered to him, who had encouraged his heart, who had cheered his spirit and sympathized with the Lord's prisoner in his bonds.

Are there not some whom we could refresh, some drooping spirits whom we could water, some whom we might be able to cheer and encourage? And then having done it once, do it often!

Of Onesiphorus it is also said, "He sought me out very diligently, and found me." And there are some lonely ones who will only be found in this way. They will need seeking out and finding, and such service is noticed by Him who could seek out the poor outcast woman of Sychar's well. They are known to the Lord and never forgotten by Him; yet He would have us search them out, and by 'so doing remind them of that link which binds us together and to Christ in glory.

Both in Rome and Ephesus Onesiphorus ministered to the Apostle; in what way we do not know, but it was known to the Lord and was precious to Him, because done to one of His own, as He says,

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Oh, that we too may be ready thus to serve Him as we serve those that are His own!

He Prepared His Heart: Marks of a Faithful Servant

In the book of Ezra the genealogy of Ezra is traced back to Aaron (chap. 7:1-5). He was one therefore entitled to all the rights and privileges of the priesthood (see chap. 2:62); and moreover he was a ready scribe in the law of his God, and thereby qualified to be the instructor of the people in the statutes of Jehovah. (See Lev. 10:8-11; Mal. 2:4-7.) He became a priest by birth and consecration; but he only became "a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given," by personal study of the Word. Inherited office, therefore, even with the Jews, could not bestow the qualifications for its exercise - these could only come from individual converse with God in the Scriptures - for while by virtue of consecration the priest was entitled by grace to minister before God, he could only minister acceptably when all was done in obedience to the Word; and it was impossible that he could teach unless he himself were acquainted with the mind of God. It was neglect of this second part of their office that led to the failure and corruption of the priesthood; for so completely was the Word of God forgotten in the days of Josiah, that the finding of a copy of the law in the temple became an epoch in his reign.

It is therefore of surpassing interest - like finding a beautiful flower in the midst of a sandy desert - to discover in Ezra one who, while he cherished his priestly descent, found his joy and strength in the law of his God; and in verse 10, the secret of his attainments is unfolded. He had "prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it." Let the reader ponder this significant and instructive statement-"He had prepared his heart." So the Apostle prayed for the Ephesian believers, that the eyes of their heart ("heart" is the right reading) might be enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of His calling, etc. (Eph. 1:18.) Yes, it is to the heart that the revelations of God are made, even as it was to the heart of Mary Magdalene that the Lord manifested Himself at the sepulcher, rather than to the intelligence of His disciples. Nor can we attach too much importance to this truth. Preparation of heart (and this also comes from the Lord) is everything, whether for the study of the Word, for prayer, or for worship. (See 1 Cor. 8:1-3; Heb. 10:22; 1 John 3:20-23.)

There is yet another thing. If Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, it was first and foremost that he might do it. It was not therefore to increase his knowledge, to add to his reputation as a teacher, but it was that his heart, life, and ways might be formed by it-that his own walk might be the embodiment of the truth, and thus well-pleasing to the Lord. Then followed teaching, "and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." This order never can be neglected with impunity, for where teaching does not flow out of a heart that is itself subject to the truth, it is not only powerless to influence others, but it will also harden the heart of the teacher himself. This is the secret of many a failure in the Church of God. The saints are ever and anon startled by the sudden departure from the truth, or by the fall, of those who had occupied the place of teachers; but whenever the state of the heart is overlooked, and the activity of mind is permitted upon divine things, the soul is exposed to some of Satan's most subtle temptations. A true teacher should be able in measure, like Paul, to point to his own example and say, as he did to the Thessalonians, "Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." (Also Acts 20.)

It is evident moreover that Ezra was in communion with the mind of God as to His people. His heart was upon them, for we learn that he had sought permission of the king to go up to Jerusalem, and that "the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him." Ezra 7:6. What he desired, therefore, was the welfare, the blessing of his people, the people of his God; but being under subjection to the king, he had to obtain his leave; for the Lord will not have us, even for His own service, slight the authority under which we are placed. If, however, the Lord had put the desire to serve Him in the heart of Ezra, He would influence the king to answer His servant's request.

How good it is to leave ourselves in His hands! We are tempted oftentimes to overleap the barriers which man may place in our path, to force open the doors which the hand of God may have closed; but it is for our comfort and strength to remember that the Lord can make His way plain before our face whenever He wills, and that our part is to quietly wait on Him, ready to go forward when He shall speak the word. The recognition of the hand of God upon him was a characteristic of this devoted servant (see chap. 7:9; 8:18, 22, 31, etc.), and it was at once both the source of his patience and of his courage.

Headship and Lordship

It is deeply interesting and most profitable to mark the varied lines of truth laid down in the Word of God, and to note how all these lines stand inseparably linked with the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the divine Center of all truth; and it is as we keep the eye of faith steadily fixed on Him, that each truth will find its right place in our souls, and exert its due influence and formative power over our course and character. There is in all of us a tendency to be one-sided - to take up some one particular truth and press it to such a degree as to interfere with the healthy action of some other truth. This is a serious mistake, and it tends to damage the cause of truth, and hinder the growth of our souls. It is by the truth, not some truth, we grow; by the truth we are sanctified. But if we only take a part of the truth - if our character is molded, and our way shaped by some particular truth - there can be no real growth, no true sanctification. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." 1 Pet. 2:2. "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." John 17:17. It is by the whole truth of God as contained in the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit forms and fashions and leads on the Church collectively, and each individual believer; and we may rest assured that where some special truth is unduly pressed, or some other truth practically ignored, there must be, as a result, a defective character and an inadequate testimony.

Take, for example, the two great subjects named at the head of this article-"Headship and Lordship." Is it not important to give each of these truths its true place? Is not Christ Head of His body, the Church, as well as Lord of the individual members? And, if so, should not our conduct be ruled, and our character formed, by the spiritual application of the former as well as the latter? Unquestionably. Well then if we think of Christ as Head, it leads us into a very distinct and a very practical range of truth. It will not interfere with the truth of His Lordship, but it will tend to keep the soul well balanced, which is so needful in days like the present. If we think only of Christ as Lord of His servants, individually, we shall entirely lose the sense of our relationship one to another, as members of that one body of which He is the Head; and thus we shall be drawn away into mere independency, acting without the slightest reference to our fellow members. We shall, to use a figure, become like the hairs of an electrified broom, each standing out in his own intense individuality, and practically disowning all vital connection with our brethren.

But, on the other hand, when the truth of Christ's Headship gets its proper place in our souls - when we know and believe that "there is one body," and that we are members one of another - then while we most fully own that each one of us, in our individual path and service is responsible to the "one Lord" it will follow as a grand practical result that our walk and ways are affecting every member of the body of Christ on earth. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." We can no longer view ourselves as independent isolated atoms, seeing we are incorporated as members of "one body" by "one Spirit," and thus linked with the one "Head" in heaven.

This great doctrine is clearly and fully unfolded in Rom. 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12, to which we beg the reader's serious attention. And, be it remembered, that this truth of Christ's Headship and

our membership is not a thing of the past merely; it is a present reality-a grand formative truth-to be tenaciously held, and practically carried out from day to day. "There is one body." This holds good today, just as thoroughly as when the inspired Apostle penned the epistle to the Ephesians; and hence it follows that each individual believer is exerting a good or a bad influence upon believers at the very antipodes.

Does this seem incredible? If so, it is only to carnal reason and blind unbelief. Surely we cannot reduce the Church of God - the body of Christ - to a matter of geographical position. That Church, that body, is united by - what? Life? No. Faith? No. By what then? By God the Holy Spirit. Old Testament saints had life and faith; but what could they have known about a Head in heaven or a body on earth? Nothing whatever. If anyone had spoken to Abraham about being a member of a body, he would not have understood it. How could he? There was nothing of the kind existing. There was no Head in heaven, and hence there could be no body on earth. True, the eternal Son was in heaven, as a divine Person in the eternal Trinity; but He was not there as a glorified Man, or Head of a body. Nay more; even in the days of His flesh, we hear Him saying, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." No union, no Headship, no membership, no vital connection until after His death upon the cross. It was not until redemption became an accomplished fact that heaven beheld that wonder of wonders, namely, glorified humanity on the throne of God; and the counterpart of that was. God the Holy Spirit dwelling in men upon earth. Old Testament saints would have understood Lordship, but not Headship. The latter had no existence, save in the eternal purpose of God. It did not exist in fact until Christ took His seat on high, having obtained eternal redemption.

Hence then this truth of Headship is most glorious and precious. It claims the earnest attention of the Christian reader. We would solemnly and earnestly entreat him not to regard it as a mere speculation - a matter of no importance. Let him be assured it is a great fundamental truth, having its source in a risen Christ in glory - its fountain in accomplished redemption-its present sphere of display, this earth - its power of development, the Holy Spirit - its authority in the New Testament.

The Heavenly Manna

It is our privilege, as those who have been baptized unto Christ's death, and "risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God," to feed upon Christ as "the bread of life" which "came down from heaven." This is our wilderness food - Christ as ministered by the Holy Ghost through the written Word; while, for our spiritual refreshment, the Holy Ghost has come down as the precious fruit of the smitten Rock - Christ, as smitten for us. Such is our rare portion in this desert world.

Now, it is obvious that, in order to enjoy such a portion as this, our hearts must be weaned from everything in this present evil world-from all that would address itself to us as natural men-as men alive in the flesh. A worldly heart - a carnal mind - would neither find Christ in the Word, nor enjoy Him if found. The manna was so pure and delicate that it could not bear contact with the earth. It fell upon the dew (see Numb. 11:9), and had to be gathered ere the sun was up. Each one, therefore, had to rise early and seek his daily portion. So it is with the people of God now. The heavenly Manna must be gathered fresh every morning. Yesterday's Manna will not do for today, nor today's for tomorrow. We must feed upon Christ every day, with fresh energy of the Spirit, else we shall cease to grow. Moreover, we must make Christ our primary object. We must seek Him "early," before other things have had time to take possession of our poor susceptible hearts. Many of us, alas! fail in this. We give Christ a secondary place, and the consequence is, we are left feeble and barren. The enemy, ever watchful, takes advantage of our excessive spiritual indolence to rob us of the blessedness and strength which flow from feeding upon Christ. The new life in the believer can only be nourished and sustained by Christ. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." John 6:57.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the One who came down from heaven to be His people's food, is ineffably precious to the renewed soul; but, in order to enjoy Him thus, we need to realize ourselves as in the wilderness, separated to God in the power of accomplished redemption. If I am walking with God through the desert, I shall be satisfied with the food which He provides, and that is, Christ as come down from heaven. "The old corn of the land" of Canaan has its antitype in Christ ascended up on high, and seated in the glory. As such, He is the proper food of those who, by faith, know themselves as raised up together, and seated together in Him in the heavenlies. But the Manna, that is, Christ as come down from heaven, is for the people of God in their wilderness life and experience. As a people journeying down here, we need a Christ who also journeyed down here; as a people seated in spirit up there, we have a Christ who is seated up there. This may help to explain the difference between the manna and the old corn of the land. It is not a question of redemption; that we have in the blood of the cross, and there alone. It is simply the provision which God has made for His people, according to their varied attitudes, whether as actually toiling in the desert, or in spirit taking possession of the heavenly inheritance.

What a striking picture is presented by Israel in the wilderness! Egypt was behind them, Canaan before them, and the sand of the desert around them, while they themselves were called to look

up to heaven for their daily supply. The wilderness afforded not one blade of grass or one drop of water for the Israel of God. In Jehovah alone was their portion. Most touching illustration of God's pilgrim people in this wilderness world! They have nothing here. Their life, being heavenly, can only be sustained by heavenly things. Though in the world, they are not of it, for Christ has chosen them out of it. As a heaven-born people, they are on their way to their birthplace, and sustained by food sent from thence. Theirs is an upward and onward course. The glory leads only thus. It is utterly vain to cast the eye backward in the direction of Egypt; not a ray of the glory can there be discerned. "They looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud." Jehovah's chariot was in the wilderness, and all who desired companionship with Him should be there likewise; and if there, the heavenly manna should be their food, and that alone.

True, this manna was strange sustenance, such as an Egyptian could never understand, appreciate, or live upon; but those who had been "baptized... in the cloud and in the sea" could, if walking in consistency with that significant baptism, enjoy and be nourished by it. Thus it is now in the case of the true believer. The worldling cannot understand how he lives. Both his life and that which sustains it lie entirely beyond the range of nature's keenest vision. Christ is his life, and on Christ he lives. He feeds, by faith, upon the powerful attractions of One who, though being "God over all, blessed forever," "took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Phil. 2:7. He traces Him from the bosom of the Father to the cross, and from the cross to the throne, and finds Him, in every stage of His journey, and in every attitude of His life, to be most precious food for his new man. All around, though, is morally a waste howling wilderness, affording nothing for the renewed mind; and just in proportion as the Christian finds any material to feed upon must his spiritual man be hindered in his progress. The only provision which God has made is the heavenly Manna, and on this the true believer should ever feed.

It is truly deplorable to find Christians seeking after the things of the world. It proves, very distinctly, that they are loathing the heavenly Manna, and esteeming it "light" food; they are ministering to that which they ought to mortify. The activities of the new life will ever show themselves in connection with the subjugation of "the old man with his deeds"; and the more that is accomplished, the more will we desire to feed upon the "bread which strengtheneth man's heart." As in nature, the more we exercise, the better the appetite, so in grace, the more our renewed faculties are called into play, the more we feel the need of feeding, each day, upon Christ. It is one thing to know that we have life in Christ, together with full forgiveness and acceptance before God, and it is quite another to be in habitual communion with Him -feeding upon Him by faith - making Him the exclusive food of our souls. Very many profess to have found pardon and peace in Jesus, who, in reality, are feeding upon a variety of things which have no connection with Him. They feed their minds with the varied frivolous and vapid literature of the day. Will they find Christ there? Is it by such instrumentality that the Holy Ghost ministers Christ to the soul? Are these the pure dewdrops on which the heavenly Manna descends for the sustenance of God's redeemed in the desert? Alas! no; they are the gross materials in which the carnal mind delights. How then can a true Christian live upon such? We know, by the teaching of God's Word, that he carries about with him two natures; and it may be asked, Which of the two is it that feeds upon the world's news and the world's literature? Is it the old or the new? There can be but one reply. Well then which of the two am I desirous of cherishing? Assuredly my conduct will afford the truest answer to this inquiry. If I sincerely desire to grow in the divine life - if my one grand object is

to be assimilated and devoted to Christ- if I am earnestly breathing after an extension of God's kingdom within, I shall, without doubt, seek continually that character of nourishment which is designed of God to promote my spiritual growth.

If an Israelite neglected to gather, in the freshness of the morning hour, his daily portion of the divinely appointed food, he would speedily have become lacking in strength for his journey. Thus it is with us. We must make Christ the paramount object of our soul's pursuit, else our spiritual life will inevitably decline. We cannot even feed upon feelings and experiences connected with Christ, for they, inasmuch as they are fluctuating, cannot form our spiritual nourishment. It was Christ yesterday, and it must be Christ today, and Christ forever.

Fellow Christian, see carefully to it that you are not only saved by Christ, but also living on Him. Make Him the daily portion of your soul. Seek Him "early," seek Him "only." When anything solicits your attention, ask the question, Will this bring Christ to my heart? Will it unfold Him to my affections, or draw me near to His Person? If not, reject it at once; yes, reject it, though it present itself under the most specious appearance and with the most commanding authority. If your honest purpose be to get on in the divine life, to progress in spirituality, to cultivate personal acquaintance with Christ, then challenge your heart solemnly and faithfully as to this. Make Christ your habitual food. Go, gather the manna that falls on the dewdrops, and feed upon it with an appetite sharpened by a diligent walk with God through the desert. May the rich grace of God the Holy Ghost abundantly strengthen you in all this!

Himself

May He Himself be more with and before us. a nearer and more real object than ever!

Truth that gives thoughts is not fully the right thing; but truth that gives Himself - that is the thing.

Jesus once here - now in the heavens - again to be here and with us forever - the same Jesus throughout - known for eternity as He was known in His track through the cities and villages of Israel - this is the mystery that gives us Himself.

And it is the business of faith to reach Himself. The centurion pierced the cloud, the thick cloud, of His humiliation, and got at the divine glories which lay the other side of it, or under it. The poor sinner of the city pierced the cloud, the dark cloud, of her own sin and misery, and got at the divine love that could heal it all. Faith may thus find various excellencies in Him, but it is Himself it reaches.

Faith sits and sings,

"All human beauties, all divine,

In my Beloved meet and shine."

Let not doctrinal acquaintance with His work turn you from personal acquaintance with Himself.

The History of Jonah the Prophet: Practical Lessons for Admonition

Our moral corruption is very deep. It is complete. But at times it will betray itself in very repulsive shapes from which, with all the knowledge of it which we have, we instinctively shrink, confounded at the thought that they belong to us. Privileges under God's own hand may only serve to develop instead of curing this corruption.

The love of distinction was inlaid in us at the very outset of man's apostasy. "Ye shall be as gods" was listened to; to this lust, this love of distinction, we will in cold blood sacrifice all that may stand in our way, without respect, as it were, to sex or age, as at the beginning Adam sacrificed the Lord Himself to it (Gen. 3).

We take God's gifts, and deck ourselves with them. The Church at Corinth was such a one as that. Instead of using God's gifts for others, the brethren there were displaying them. But the man who had the mind of Christ, in the midst of them, would say, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." 1 Cor. 14:19.

The Jew-the favored, privileged Jew-grievously sinned in this way. Romans 2 convicted him on this ground. His separation from the nations was of God; but, instead of using this as witness to the holiness of God in the midst of a revolted world's pollution, he took occasion to exalt himself by it. He boasted in God and in the law, but he dishonored God by breaking the law.

Now Jonah was of the nation of Israel, and among the prophets of God. He was thus doubly privileged. But nature is quick in him to take advantage of this, and to serve her own fond ends by it. Yes, and Jonah was a saint of God also; but this alone, under pressure and temptation of the flesh, does not secure victory over nature.

As a prophet, the Lord sends him with a word against Nineveh-a word of judgment. But he knew when he received it that in the bosom of Him who was sending him, mercy was rejoicing; and he reckoned, therefore, that his word that was to speak of judgment would be set aside by the grace that abounded in Him (chap. 4:2).

Was he prepared for this? Could he, a Jew, suffer it, that a Gentile city should be favored and share the mercy and salvation of God? Could he, a prophet, suffer it, that his word should fall to the ground, and that too in the presence of the uncircumcised? This was too much. He goes on board a ship bound for Tarshish, instead of crossing the country to Nineveh. But surely, when we look at him under such conditions, we may say, it is a proud apostate, another Adam, that is now in the merchant ship on the waters of the Mediterranean. He was a transgressor through pride, like Adam; and, like Adam, he must take the sentence of death unto himself.

Simple, sure, and yet solemn, all this!

To accept the punishment of our sin is the first duty of an erring soul. We are not to seek to right ourselves by an effort of our own, when we have gone wrong, lest Hormah (Num. 14) be our

portion. Our first duty is to accept, in the spirit of confession, the punishment of our sin-to be humbled under the mighty or chastening hand of God (Lev. 26:41). David did this, and the kingdom was his again. Jonah now does the same. "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea," said he to the mariners, in the midst of the tempest; "So shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." And they did so, but with a grace that might well shame their betters, which bespeaks the hand of God with them, as it was against Jonah. And Jonah is soon wrapped among the weeds of the sea, down in the bottoms of the mountains there.

Could Gentile Nineveh be in a worse plight? Was not Jonah's circumcision as uncircumcision? A Jew, a prophet in the depths of the sea, with the weeds wrapped about his head, because of the displeasure of Jehovah! Surely, such a one in such a state may well cease his boastings, and no longer despise others. Could anyone be lower? Proud Adam was behind the trees of the garden; proud Jonah was in the bottom of the sea.

The Lord by no means clears the guilty. The Judge of all the earth does right. But grace brings salvation, and this very soon; and it will be only Jonah's sin that shall be in the bottom of the sea, Jonah himself being delivered as his first father, Adam, left his guilt and his covert behind him and returned to the presence of God.

But Jonah was taught as well as delivered. In the belly of the fish he finds out that, Jew as he was, he stood in need of the salvation of God, just as much as any Gentile could need it. Uncircumcised Nineveh had been unclean and despised in his eyes, and he begrudged her God's mercy. What would become of himself now but for that mercy? He was in prison and he deserved to be there. What could do for him, what reach his condition, but mercy-free, full, and sovereign? "Salvation is of the LORD," he has to say. It is not in himself as a privileged Jew or a gifted prophet that he will now rejoice, but only in Him to whom it belongs to bring salvation.

And then the exulting question arises, Is He the God of the Jews only? nay, but of the Gentiles also. Our need of salvation, our dependence on the sovereignty and grace of God, equalizes us all. "It is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." Rom. 3:30. The Jew must come in on the very same mercy that saves the Gentile. Jonah must be as Nineveh.

This is the lesson the whale's belly taught Jonah, the Jew. Let Nineveh be what it may, Gentile and uncircumcised, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, or anything else, it could not stand more in need of the salvation of God than the favored Jew and the privileged, gifted prophet at that moment did, being as in hell for his transgression. It was all over with him, but for that. But that he gets, and the fish casts him up on the dry land, when he had learned and confessed and declared, "Salvation is of the LORD."

He was a sign to the Ninevites.

His nation, by-and-by, will have the like lesson. No sign is now left with them, but that of this prophet; and they will have to find out, as from the belly of hell, or as from under the judgment of God (where now as a nation they are lying), that grace and the redemption it works is their only place and their only refuge.

But this salvation of God in which Jonah is called to rejoice, we know gets all its authority from the mystery of the cross, because One who could do so for us sinners went down under the dominion of death, under the judgment of sin, and of whom in that condition, as in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights, Jonah himself in the belly of the fish for the like time, is made the type.

And when we think of this, we may say, Scripture may magnify its office, as the Apostle of the Gentiles does his. It has to reveal God and His counsels; and surely it does this in marvelous and fruitful wisdom, delivering forth, as here, pieces of history for our instruction, but at the same time making that history deliver forth samples and pledges and foreshadowings of further and richer secrets for our more abundant instruction.

Jonah, as a sign, suits both the Lord Himself, and Israel as a nation, as the gospels let us know. Israel must go through death and resurrection. Their iniquity is not to be purged till they die (Isa. 22). All Scripture affirms this-the valley of dry bones illustrates it. But they will be a risen people in the day of the kingdom-all thanks and praise to the death and resurrection of the Son of God for this and every blessing! And Jonah's death and resurrection, as I may again say, applies significantly or typically to the history of his nation. and to the history of his Savior (see Matt. 12:40; Luke 11:29, 30).

Jonah's sin too was the expression of the nation's. He and they have alike refused the thought of mercy to the Gentiles (1 Thess. 2:16). When Paul began to speak of God's mercy to the Gentiles, the Jews would listen to him no longer (Acts 22:21, 22).

The story of our prophet is a fruitful one. True as a narrative, it is significant as a parable; and all of us, the elect of God as well as Israel, may, in our way, take our place with him as dead and risen, the only character that can be ours as saved sinners.

Returning, however, to the history itself, we may now observe that as one that had been thus taught, taught his need of God's grace, Jonah is again sent with the message to Nineveh. He goes, and with words of judgment on his lips, he enters that great city, that Nimrod city, the representation in that day of the pride and daring of a revolted world. "Yet forty days," he proclaims as a herald, "and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Thus he mourned. It was his commission. Responsively, Nineveh lamented. The king rose from his throne, and all the nation put themselves in sackcloth; and in such condition, as humbled under the hand of God, a king of Nineveh shall find the Lord as a king of Israel had before found Him. "I said," says David, "I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm 32:5). "Who can tell," says this royal Gentile, "if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not." And so it was "God repented of the evil, that He had said He would do unto them; and He did it not."

"Is He the God of the Jews only?" again I ask with the Apostle; and with him again I answer, "Yes, of the Gentiles also." Grace is divine. Government may know a people, and order them as such; grace knows sinners just as they are- whoever - wherever. The earth has its arrangements, but heaven holds its court in sovereignty. Nineveh, like Jerusalem, is spared; the hand of the destroying angel is stayed over the one city as well as over the other (1 Chron. 21; Jonah 3).

But "tell it not in Gath." Let not the daughters of the Philistines hear of Jonah the Jew in the 4th chapter!

Did Lot go a second time to Sodom? Did Hezekiah, after the going back of the shadow upon the sundial, sin through pride, with the ambassadors of Babylon? Did Josiah, after his humbling and tenderness, go willfully to the battle against the king of Egypt? Did Peter, in spite of warnings from his Lord, deny his Lord? Have you and I, beloved, forgotten lessons learned, and corrections endured? And is Jonah now to be unmindful of the whale's belly? It is a passing wonder- a lesson so sealed, so stamped, so engraven, apparently, and yet so quickly lost to the soul!

Jonah is displeased. The mercy shown to Nineveh has made a Gentile important to the God of heaven and earth, and this was too much for the Jew. The word of a prophet had suffered wrong, as pride suggested, at the hand of the God of mercy. Jonah was very angry. He cannot exactly again take ship and go to Tarshish; but, in the spirit of him who lately did so, he goes outside the city, and he says, "O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil. Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live."

What naughtiness of heart all this was! Was he preparing another whale's belly for himself? He well deserved it. What trouble we make for ourselves! Why did not Lot remain in the holy, peaceful tent of Abraham? and why did he prepare for himself a first and second furnace in Sodom? Why did David bring a sword upon his house, which was commissioned of the Lord to hang over it unsheathed to the day of his death? "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." 1 Cor. 11:31, 32. The Lord's voice cries to the city, and the man of wisdom shall hear; but Jonah was deaf. He has forgotten the lesson of the fish's belly, and he must now be put to learn the lesson of the withered gourd.

Outside the city, Jonah prepares a booth for himself, that he may sit under it, in his moody, bad temper-angry as he was with the Lord. The Lord then prepares a gourd to overshadow Jonah in his booth, and Jonah is very glad because of the gourd. But then the Lord prepares a worm that eats and withers up the gourd; and the sun and the east wind beating on the unsheltered head of Jonah makes him exceedingly angry, and he wishes in himself to die.

The Lord then in marvelous gentleness turns all these simple circumstances into a page of the profoundest and most effective instruction. "And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

The prophet's delight in the gourd is but the faint reflection of the Lord's delight in the mercy that visits the creatures of His hand-be they whom they may-at Nineveh, at Jerusalem, or elsewhere, it matters not. And if Jonah would fain have the gourd spared, he must allow repentant Nineveh to be spared. Out of his own mouth he shall be judged; Jonah shall witness for the Lord against

himself.

It is, indeed, a precious and an excellent word. Jonah had been sent down to learn the grace of God in one character of it, and now he had been taught it in another; that is, his need of it, and God's delight in it. The whale's belly, the belly of hell, where he once was, had taught him his own need of "salvation," in that sovereignty of it, in that magnificent height and depth of it, that could stretch as from the throne of power in the highest heavens, down to the bottom of the seas in the lowest, to deliver a captive there under the righteous judgment of God. The withered gourd now teaches him (as all parables in Luke 15 have also taught us) how the blessed Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Lord of the cattle on the thousand hills, whether in Assyria or Judea, delights in His creatures, the works of His hands, finding His rest and refreshment in the mercy that spares them when they repent and turn to Him.

The Holy Anointing Oil

In Exodus 30, verses 22-33, we have the "holy anointing oil," with which the priests, together with all the furniture of the tabernacle, were anointed. In this we discern a type of the varied graces of the Holy Ghost, which were found in all their divine fullness in Christ. "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad." Psalm 45:8. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 10:38). All the graces of the Spirit in their perfect fragrance centered in Christ; and it is from Him alone they can flow. He, as to His humanity, was conceived of the Holy Ghost; and, ere He entered upon His public ministry, He was anointed with the Holy Ghost; and, finally, when He had taken His seat on high, in token of an accomplished redemption, He shed forth upon His body, the Church, the precious gifts of the Holy Ghost. (See Matt. 1:20; 3:16, 17; Luke 4:18, 19; Acts 2:33; 10:45, 46; Eph. 4:8-13.)

It is as those who are associated with this ever blessed and highly exalted Christ that believers are partakers of the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost; and, moreover, it is as they walk in habitual nearness to Him that they either enjoy or emit the fragrance thereof. The unrenewed man knows nothing of this. "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured." The graces of the Spirit can never be connected with man's flesh, for the Holy Ghost cannot own nature. Not one of the fruits of the Spirit was ever yet produced in nature's barren soil. We "must be born again." It is only as connected with the new man, as being part of "the new creation," that we can know anything of the fruits of the Holy Ghost. It is of no possible value to seek to imitate those fruits and graces. The fairest fruits that ever grew in nature's fields, in their highest state of cultivation- the most amiable traits which nature can exhibit-must be utterly disowned in the sanctuary of God. "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it: it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you. Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people." There must be no counterfeit of the Spirit's work; all must be of the Spirit-wholly, really of the Spirit. Moreover, that which is of the Spirit must not be attributed to man. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2:14.

There is a very beautiful allusion to this "holy anointing oil" in one of the "Songs of degrees" - "Behold," says the psalmist, "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." Psalm 133:1, 2. The head of the priestly house being anointed with the holy oil, the very "skirts of his garments" must exhibit the precious effects. May my reader experience the power of this anointing! May he know the value of having "an unction from the Holy One," and of being "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise"! Nothing is of any value in the divine estimation save that which connects itself immediately with Christ, and whatever is so connected can receive the holy anointing.

In the concluding paragraph of this most comprehensive chapter, we have the "sweet spices... tempered together, pure and holy." This surpassingly precious perfume presents to us the unmeasured and unmeasurable perfections of Christ. There was no special quantity of each ingredient prescribed, because the graces that dwell in Christ, the beauties and excellencies that are concentrated in His adorable Person, are without limit. Naught save the infinite mind of Deity could scan the infinite perfections of Him in whom all the fullness of Deity dwells; and as eternity rolls along its course of everlasting ages, those glorious perfections will ever be unfolding themselves in the view of worshiping saints and angels. Ever and anon, as some fresh beams of light shall burst forth from that central Sun of divine glory, the courts of heaven above, and the wide fields of creation beneath, shall resound with thrilling Alleluiahs to Him who was, who is, and who ever shall be the Object of praise to all the ranks of created intelligence.

But not only was there no prescribed quantity of the ingredients; we also read, "Of each shall there be a like weight." Every feature of moral excellence found its due place and proper proportions in Christ. No one quality ever displaced or interfered with another; all was "tempered together, pure and holy," and emitted an odor so fragrant that none but God could appreciate it.

"And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto, you most holy." There is uncommon depth and power in the expression "very small." It teaches us that every little movement in the life of Christ, every minute circumstance, every act, every word, every look, every feature, every trait, every lineament, emits an odor produced by an equal proportion - "a like weight" of all the divine graces that compose His character. The smaller the perfume was beaten, the more its rare and exquisite temper was manifested.

"And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people." This fragrant perfume was designed exclusively for Jehovah. Its place was "before the testimony." There is that in Jesus which only God could appreciate. True, every believing heart can draw nigh to His matchless Person, and more than satisfy its deepest and most intense longings; still, after all God's redeemed have drunk to the utmost of their capacity, after angels have gazed on the peerless glories of the Man Christ Jesus as earnestly as their vision is capable of-after all, there will be that in Him which God alone can fathom and enjoy. No human or angelic eye could duly trace the exquisitely minute parts of that holy perfume beaten "very small," nor could earth afford a proper sphere in which to emit its divine and heavenly odor.

Jehovah Manifests His Character: Jewish History

Jewish history is especially the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah. To ask, In what does this history concern us? is to say, Of what use is it that I should know what my Father is about to do for my brethren, and the manifestation of His character in His acts?

It is evident from the place which the subject occupies in His Word that their affairs are very dear to our God and Father, if they be not to us. It is in this people, by the ways of God revealed to them, that the character of Jehovah is fully revealed, that the nations will know Jehovah, and that we shall ourselves learn to know Him.

The same person may be king of a country, and father of a family; and this is the difference between God's actings toward us and the Jews. Toward the Church it is the character of Father; toward the Jews it is the character of Jehovah, the King. His faithfulness, unchangeableness, His almighty power, His government of the whole earth - all this is revealed in His relationship toward Israel. It is in this way that the history of the people lets us into the character of Jehovah.

"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion,... then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them." Psalm 126:1, 2.

See on the same subject, Eze. 39:6, 7, 28: "And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD. So will I make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let them pollute My holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD [Jehovah], the Holy One in Israel.... Then shall they know that I am the LORD [Jehovah] their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them anymore there." This is the way in which Jehovah reveals Himself. The Father reveals Himself to our souls by the gospel, by the spirit of adoption; but Jehovah makes Himself known by His judgments - by the exercise of His power on the earth.

I have said that the Father reveals Himself by the gospel, because the gospel is a system of pure grace - a system which teaches us to act toward others on the principle of pure grace, as we have been acted on by the Father. It is not "eye for eye, tooth for tooth"; it is not what justice requires, the law of retaliation, or equity, but a principle according to which I ought to be perfect, as my Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48). But it will not be mere grace that is suffering evil and doing good in the government of Jehovah.

Jehovah, without doubt, will bless the nations; but the character of His kingdom is that "judgment shall return unto righteousness" (Psalm 94:15). At the first coming of Jesus Christ, judgment was with Pilate, and righteousness with Jesus; but when Jesus shall return, judgment shall be united to righteousness.

The people of Christ now, the children of God, ought to follow the example of the Savior; that is, not expect or wish that judgment should be in the rigor of righteousness, but they should be gentle

and humble in the midst of all the wrongs which they suffer on the part of man. United to Christ, they are indemnified for all their wrongs in the strength of His intimate love which comforts them by the consolations of the presence of His Spirit and, more than this, by the hopes of the heavenly glory. On the other hand, Jehovah will console His people by the direct acting of His righteousness in their favor (see Psalm 65:5), and by reestablishing them in earthly glory.

The Jews then are the people by whom, and in whom, God sustains His name of Jehovah, and His character of judgment and righteousness. The Church are the people in whom, as in His family, the Father reveals His character of goodness and love.

Jesus Christ As Lord

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 shall 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 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 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," says he, "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 of 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 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 a free-thinking 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 the 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 free-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 of 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 the orthodoxy 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 the "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's and John's word does that) but against the tendencies of the natural heart to gratify itself. If Peter put you looking in one direction-watching against the forms and actings 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 words, 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.

Here, beloved, Jude is showing us the danger of tampering with the girdle that is to be about the loins. May we bear away his word. We shall be much happier; we never can be losers by giving up

our own will to the Lord Jesus. As one who is redeemed by Christ, and who belongs to Christ, I should have no will of my own. I have no right to do my own pleasure. I have no right to take a walk just to please myself. The Lord may give me the indulgence of it, and strew the path of my feet with ten thousand mercies; but the moment I erect my own will as the principle of my actions, I have "despised dominion"-I have despised the Lordship of Jesus. This is the force and bearing of the word of God by Jude.

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... all that are 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 object 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 fifteenth 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, 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 our 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, and instead of saying, "This is my pleasure, this 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 shortcoming 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).

Jesus: the Author and Finisher of Faith

Heb. 12:2

All the witnesses for God spoken of in Hebrews 11 are for our encouragement in the path of faith; but then there is a difference between them and Jesus. Accordingly, the Apostle here singles Him out of all. If I see Abraham, who by faith sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, or Isaac, who blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come, or Jacob on his dying bed of blessing and worship, they have all run their race before; but in Jesus we have a far higher witness. Besides, in Him there is the grace to sustain us in the race.

Therefore, in looking unto Jesus, we get a motive and an unfailing source of strength. We see in Jesus the love which led Him to take this place for us, who "when He putteth forth His own sheep... goeth before them." For, if a race is to be run, we need a forerunner. And in Jesus we have one who did run before us, and has become the Captain and Completer of faith, in looking to whom we draw strength into our souls.

While Abraham and the rest filled up, in their little measure, their several places, Christ has filled up the whole course of faith. There is no position that I can be in, no trial whatever that I can endure, but Christ has passed through all and overcome. Thus I have One who presents Himself in that character which I need; and I find in Him one who knows what grace is needed, and will supply it; for He has overcome, and says to me, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" - not, you shall overcome, but, I have overcome. It was so in the case of the blind man (John 11:31, etc.) who was cast out of the synagogue; and why? Because Jesus had been cast out before him. And now we learn, that however rough the storm may be, it does but throw us the more thoroughly on Christ; and thus that which would have been a sore trial does but chase us closer to Him.

Whatever turns our eye away from Christ is but a hindrance to our running the race that is set before us. If Christ has become the Object of the soul, let us lay aside every weight. If I am running a race, a cloak, however comfortable, would only hinder and must be got rid of; it is a weight, and would prevent my running. I do not want anything to entangle my feet. If I am looking to Jesus in the appointed race, I must throw the cloak aside; otherwise it would seem strange to throw away so useful a garment. Nay, more; however much encouragement the history of antecedent faithful witnesses in Hebrews 11 may give, our eye must be fixed on Jesus, the true and faithful One. There is not a trial or difficulty that He has not passed through before me, and found His resources in God the Father. He will supply the needed grace to my heart.

There were these two features in the life of Christ down here. First, He exercised constant dependence on His Father, as He said, "I live by the Father." The new man is ever a dependent man. The moment we get out of dependence, we get into the flesh. It is not through our own life (for, indeed, we have but death) that we really live, but by Christ, through feeding on Him. In the highest possible sense, He walked in dependence on the Father, and for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame. Second, His affections were undivided. You

never find Christ having any new object revealed to Him so as to induce Him to go on in His path of faithfulness. Paul and Stephen, on the other hand, had the glory revealed to them, which enabled them to endure. For when the heaven was opened to Stephen, the Lord appeared in glory to him, as afterward to Saul of Tarsus. But when the heavens opened on Jesus, there was no object presented to Him; but, on the contrary, He was the Object of heaven; the Holy Ghost descends upon Him, and the voice of the Father declares, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus the divine Person of the Lord is always being witnessed to. The Apostle here gets hold of the preciousness of Christ in the lowliness into which He has come; but he never loses sight of the glory of Him who has come there. So when I get Christ at the baptism of John, I see Him at the lowest point (save in another way on the cross); and, finding Him there, I find all the divine compassion of His heart.

Job and His Friends: Extract

The real secret of all Job's false reasoning is to be found in the fact that he did not understand the character of God, or the object of all His dealings. He did not see that God was trying him - that He was behind the scenes and using various agents for the accomplishment of His wise and gracious ends. Even Satan himself was a mere instrument in the hand of God; nor could he move the breadth of a hair beyond the divinely prescribed limit; and, moreover, when he had executed his appointed business, he was dismissed, and we hear no more about him. God was dealing with Job. He was trying him in order that He might instruct him, withdraw him from his purpose, and hide pride from him. Had Job seized this grand point, it would have saved him a world of strife and contention. Instead of getting angry with people and things - with individuals and influences - he would have judged himself and bowed low before the Lord in meekness and brokenness and true contrition.

This is immensely important for us all. We are all prone to forget the weighty fact that "The LORD trieth the righteous." "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous." We are in His hands, and under His eye continually. We are the objects of His deep, tender, and unchanging love; but we are also the subjects of His wise moral government. His dealings with us are varied. They are sometimes preventive; sometimes corrective; always instructive. We may be bent on some course of our own, the end of which would be moral ruin. He intervenes and withdraws us from our purpose. He dashes into fragments our air-built castles, dissipates our golden dreams, and interrupts many a darling scheme on which our hearts were bent, and which would have proved to be certain destruction. "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." Job 33:29, 30.

If the reader will turn for a moment to Heb. 12:3-12, he will find much precious instruction on the subject of God's dealings with His people. We do not attempt to dwell upon it, but would merely remark that it presents three distinct ways in which we may meet the chastening of our Father's hand. We may "despise" it, as though His hand and His voice were not in it; we may "faint" under it, as though it were intolerable, and not the precious fruit of His love; or, last, we may be "exercised" by it, and thus reap, in due time, "the peaceable fruits of righteousness."

Now if our patriarch had only seized the great fact that God was dealing with him, that He was trying him for his ultimate good - that He was using circumstances, people, the Sabeans, Satan himself, as His instruments - that all his trials, his losses, his bereavements, his sufferings, were but God's marvelous agency in bringing about His wise and gracious end - that He would assuredly perfect that which concerned His dear and much loved servant, because His mercy endureth forever - in a word, had Job only lost sight of all second causes, and fixed his thoughts upon the living God alone, and accepted all from His loving hand, he would have more speedily reached the divine solution of all his difficulties.

But it is precisely here that we are all apt to break down. We get occupied with men and things - we view them in reference to ourselves. We do not walk with God through, or rather above, the

circumstances; but, on the contrary, we allow the circumstances to get power over us. In place of keeping God between us and our circumstances, we permit these latter to get between us and God. Thus we lose the sense of His presence - the light of His countenance - the holy calmness of being in His loving hand, and under His fatherly eye. We become fretful, impatient, irritable, fault-finding. We get far away from God, out of communion, thoroughly astray, judging everyone except ourselves, until at length God takes us in hand, and by His own direct and powerful ministry, brings us back to Himself in true brokenness of heart and humbleness of mind. This is "the end of the Lord."

Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

God's voice to the world from the book of Ecclesiastes is this: No rest under the sun. Each book of Scripture has its lesson, its voice to us, from God; and I believe, that in a special way, this is true of Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon-God's voice to man as man. Who was Job? He was the most righteous man - had not his equal among men. That very man of whom God says, He has not his equal, has to learn, good as he is and righteous practically with his fellow men, one truth; and he is a long time learning it. What is that? That he cannot stand before God in his own righteousness. That is the simple lesson in the book of Job. It is a long book. He does not learn it until the end. God says, in effect, to you and me, "You are no Job. I cannot say of you, what I could of My servant Job - that you are perfect and upright and eschew evil, etc. If Job could not stand before Me in his righteousness, how can you in yours?" That is the lesson of Job.

What is Ecclesiastes? If Solomon with all his resources could not find satisfaction, what is the next man going to do? Indeed, that is the very question that is asked: "What can the man do that cometh after the king?"

What is the Song of Solomon? There it is an object that more than fills the heart.

The subject of the Song of Solomon, or the object of it, is, One is found in whom we find satisfaction - "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." It did not begin that way, you know. It began the other way - "My beloved is mine." We must not stop there. There is something better than that; that is, "I am my beloved's"-the heart finding its joy in the realization of its own worthlessness, and knowing that I am His. What is our joy as the children of God today? That Christ is ours? Yes, and what else? That we are His! "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

Now that is the lesson of those three books. How long it takes us to learn that our own righteousness is worthless in the sight of God, even if it be such that our fellow man cannot point a finger at us! It is all right in its place, but do not think to stand before God in that. Job said, My righteousness I will hold fast, and will not let it go. But he did, and was glad to let it go. Is it not well for us to see God's point in each book in this way?

John 14:3

Looking tenderly at an old saint, not far from heaven's gates, the visitor said, "I'm not going to weary you now, but I'll read to you the sweetest verse in the Bible, and then we'll have prayer together." He started to read, "In My Father's house are, many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you." He was kneeling down to pray when the dying man stretched out a delaying hand and whispered, "That isn't the sweetest verse. Read on." So the visitor read on, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "That's it," whispered the dying saint; "it's Jesus I want."

Labor and Rest

"The apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately." Mark 6:30-32.

There is a word of great sweetness and comfort in these verses. We are introduced to a scene of labor and toil. The Lord had called the twelve and sent them out two by two without anything for their journey save a staff. They went forth without scrip or bread or money; they preached, they cast out devils, they raised the sick; it was a time of diligent service and incessant toil, but a time of labor which resulted in fruit. After this we find the apostles returning, gathering themselves together, and rehearsing to their blessed Master all they had done and taught.

He had sent them forth, as it were, empty-handed and destitute of all man's resources, and now they have returned and are spreading at His blessed feet their acquired treasures, the fruit of their work and toil; He, with all that tender grace and kindness which were ever His own, accepts it all and, in the divine and blessed love which ever sought the good of His own, He says, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." Let us note it well. He does not say, "Go and rest," but "Come" and "rest." Ah! it is not the desert place that could furnish the rest; if so, it might have been "Go," but it is Himself there - there where no distraction can intrude, no surge of worry, no blast of care can for a moment enter. Oh! how blessed His company in that sweet retreat, made so by Himself alone! How well may we sing of that-

"No soil of nature's evil,

No touch of man's rude hand

Shall disturb around us

That bright and happy land.

The charms that woo our senses

Shall be as pure, as fair,

For all while stealing o'er us

Shall tell of Jesus there."

But there is a further precious thought here. Our own Master and Lord knows the snare of active service, even for Him - the danger of giving it that place which alone belongs to Himself - the temptation to His poor weak child and vessel to be more absorbed with it than with Him; hence, how often do we hear Him say, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while." We are told that "there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."

In this busy day of ours, with its confessed and crying needs on every hand, how true the picture before us is; yet, while recognizing fully our clear, distinct duty to the Church and the world, and not in any wise seeking to clothe our indifference or selfishness with a religious or sanctimonious garb, let all who love His blessed service, which is indeed perfect freedom, bear in mind the lesson of our passage, which is plainly this: that the quality of our work will be poor and attenuated indeed, if it be not connected with Christ, from Christ, for Christ. Those who really and truly work for Him must first of all be sustained and fed by Himself, as they hear Him say, "Come... and rest." And oh! how gracious of Him to take His poor wearied worker by the hand, as it were, aside, apart in a desert place with Himself, shutting him out from all but Himself, that with mind undisturbed and heart undistracted, all may be gone over with Himself, in rest and quietness, and fresh thoughts of Himself and His love thus impressed upon the heart, producing renewed vigor and energy for further service for Him.

After this we have recorded a delightful instance of the deep compassion of that heart which was ever touched by distress and need. We are told the people "outwent them, and came together unto Him." Oh, how He did attract the weary and wanting ones! How He also met, and taught, and filled them! How He made the desert place to yield bread enough and to spare, and then, having finished all in His compassionate tenderness and goodness, He Himself departed into a mountain to pray; His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work.

But we must bring these thoughts to a close by a glance at the end of the chapter. In the departure of Jesus into the mountain, we are shown in figure His taking His place of intercession on high. His disciples cross the water in a boat, and we have their vicissitudes; it is such a comfort to think of what is said here, "He saw them toiling in rowing." Not the shades of night, nor the earnest vigil which He kept in prayer on the mountaintop, nor the storm-lashed lake that they were crossing could hide

His poor servants from the Master's eyes. Then He who "saw them" came to them in the darkest part of the night, walking on the water in supreme majesty, but in love, and spoke such words of comfort, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid."

"In darkest shades, if He appear,

My morning is begun."

Last, observe it is said, "He talked with them." How blessed the rest of that intercourse after all the toil and labor.

The Last Days

"These are exciting times in which we live," remarked a Christian recently.

These words have been much on my mind, and I have been pondering their implications. Let us briefly consider the "times" in which we are living.

When we as Christians view the world situation - morally and spiritually - we are able to discern in the light of Scripture that we are living in the "last days."

An acquaintance had maintained for years that "we [the world] have some problems, but things are getting better," and cited from time to time some scientific achievements to support his argument. Recently, however, he reassessed his judgment and made this observation: "The situation is becoming worse and worse; where is it all going to end?"

What has changed this thinking man's view of today's conditions that are rapidly "becoming worse and worse"? Well might the people of this world fear as to "where is it all going to end?" The news media witness to the accelerating increase of violence and corruption; the appalling increase in the crime rate is widely publicized; the moral breakdown, brazenly termed the "new morality," has become a way of life; scientific developments have created more problems than can be solved; riots, killings, and disorders are commonplace; wars and rumors of wars abound; suicides have become dreadfully frequent; and the contributing cause of nearly all this has been the turning away from the Bible and the One of whom it speaks, Jesus Christ.

In what way then are these times "exciting" for us? My Christian friend, let us understand and live according to this truth: the return of our Lord Jesus Christ is at the door! We are living in the most wonderful and vital hour in the history of mankind. Do we appreciate this glorious truth?-that we are living in the days, possibly moments, just before His return for the Church - that return of which the New Testament so often speaks.

The coming of our Lord, cherished as a living and constant hope, detaches the heart from every object on earth. All our motives and activities should be governed in relation to His coming. Our Lord appeals to our affections, while we watch and wait.

Is not this "exciting"? What joy awaits us! - to see Him face to face and to be in His company for eternity, with all the redeemed.

Are you and I enjoying our salvation so that we live it? Is there that resulting testimony toward the lost-"others who have no hope"?

We need to be reminded afresh in days like the present, that every child of God has a mission to fulfill - a work to do for Christ. We may not be called to be evangelists, pastors, or teachers, but we are called to live Christ-to represent Him- to be channels of communication between His loving heart and this dark, cold, and selfish world.

One who walked with God and knew whereof he spoke, once said, "Let us be looking unto Jesus, our strength and joy. If only we were happy in Him, we would work much better for Him."

The Leader's Memorial and His Glory

Josh. 4:9, 14

Jehovah wrought "wonders" for Israel at the Jordan, both in the actual work performed, and in the hidden meaning of -file work; hence, in the type before us, great things of God's mind are to be found.

"And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day." When the record was written, the swelling of Jordan had not swept away the leader's own memorial of the passage of the river's bed. Israel's memorial set up in Canaan was for all in the land of promise to see - "a memorial unto the children of Israel forever." Joshua's, reared in the bed of the river, was for no eye to behold when the waters were at their flood, but nonetheless a memorial for the leader himself. In the river, we may justly say, his deepest feelings would center; there, where the priests stood, the whole burden of Israel's security was borne, and there the secret power of all Israel's blessing in entering Canaan lay.

Joshua in Canaan being a type of Christ, we have in this action a significant teaching. Our Lord never forgets the deep waters through which He passed-those sufferings in and unto death, by which He vanquished him that had the power of death, the devil, and by which He opened to His people their heavenly inheritance. From the throne on high He remembers the travail of His soul, His cross, its shame and agony. Jesus, whose work has brought the people of God into heavenly places, ever remembers the swellings of Jordan, the flood of deep waters, where He, blessed be His name, stood firm for us to bring us to His God and Father.

God's people are much occupied with their blessings and, indeed, of moral necessity, these must at first fill the heart; for until, by grace, it be known how the saints are blessed in the heavenly places in Christ, it is not possible to meditate upon the way our Lord has brought us into our blessings. Our stones of memorial tell us of Jordan's depths, and what Christ suffered for our sakes, and of our blessings; but let not His memorial be forgotten! His holy Person in glory still bears the marks of the wounds of Calvary; and from heaven Jesus, speaking of His death, says to His people, "Remember Me."

The sacred memory of the place where His feet "stood firm" when the billows of God's wrath rolled over Him, should be present to the heart. True, He is no longer the sufferer; His sorrows are forever passed; He is the ascended Son of man, triumphant in His victory over death; but forever shall memories of His death fill the hearts of His people; eternally shall it be said of the Lord's stones of "witness," "They are there unto this day."

Jehovah magnified Joshua by the passage of the Jordan, and thereby obtained for him the leadership in Israel's eyes. "On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they -feared Moses, all the days of his life."

The present exaltation and place of the Lord Jesus as man is of His God and Father, and His glories and exaltation are the blessed answer to His sufferings and humiliation. "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." Eph. 4:9, 10. The Lord Jesus, the Son of man, who went down to the lowest depths, occupies the highest height in heaven; and there He bears in His Person the solemn witness to Calvary. Because of His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name (Phil. 2). He has been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and God the Father has set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, might and dominion. and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come (Eph. 1). As this exaltation of the Lord is apprehended, He becomes indeed the Leader of His people, and is magnified by them.

The Lord is not fully honored by His people until His present glory be recognized. In the light of His present exaltation as a man, on the life side of death, His glory as the Lord who died is seen. He, the risen and ascended Christ, is the first-born from among the dead, the Head over all things, the Head of His body the Church; and the more the heart apprehends Him thus, the more all that He did in dying for us is remembered.

The heavenly Leader is before His people in the teachings of the portion before us. Even in earthly matters, a leader's influence over his followers is proportionate to the honor in which they hold him. Now Christ is in heaven and in glory; and as His greatness and majesty, His strength and power, are apprehended by faith, a mighty influence is exercised over the souls and lives of His people. His position in glory, His victory, determine the blessing of the redeemed; the fullness of the blessing of the members is determined by the glory of the Head. His honor and their blessing are not to be separated. Our heavenly position in Christ is exclusively of divine grace, but it is ours in Christ on high. Now indeed it is a subject for faith, but soon it will be displayed in glory; and that display will be seen to be to the honor of our exalted Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord.

Lessons From King Jehoshaphat: Careful in Choice of Companions

How distinct and how serious is the difference between what is said of King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 17, and 18. In the one it is said that he "strengthened himself against Israel," and in the beginning of the other it is stated that he "joined affinity with Ahab." This signifies a fall, and is not without its warning to ourselves.

In chapter 20 Jehoshaphat is assailed by enemies. "The children of Ammon, and with them other besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle." The king is cast upon God-his language breathes a true spirit of dependence and real humility. He prays thus, "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee."

All this teaches us that we have greater reason to fear.

Satan as a flatterer than as an open foe. The serpent is subtle, the lion ferocious, and Satan is likened to both. He deceives, and he also seeks to devour. King Ahab did not come against Jehoshaphat as an enemy, but rather as a friend. It is here that we need to be on our guard. Jehoshaphat was by no means comfortable, however liberal he was in offering to be one with Ahab in retaking Ramoth-gilead. Who had ordered Ahab to undertake such a service? He was like certain prophets of whom we read. "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied." Jer. 23:21. Jehoshaphat felt this.

Moreover, Ahab was for madly rushing into battle with the Syrians without asking counsel of God or of anyone else. Now we come to a solemn matter for consideration. When men have made up their minds to do evil, like Ahab who sold himself to do evil, God in His judgment may allow them to be deceived. Our Lord said in His day, "I am come in My, Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." John 5:43. Blindness from God is terrible indeed. Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel had four hundred prophets - they were numerous, but false - and the Lord permitted an evil spirit to deceive them all. "There came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the LORD said,... go out, and do even so." Chap. 18:20, 21.

One might have supposed that what was said by so many must be true, but this shows how we may be misled by the devil with a cloak of sanctity. The four hundred prophets prophesied before the deluded king, and said, "Go up; for God will deliver it into the king's hand." This is, as I have said, very serious, and shows the need of prayer and acquaintance with the mind of God as revealed in His holy Word.

Poor Jehoshaphat! One cannot but pity him; he was in a false position from which it was not easy to escape. He was like the poor fly that gets entangled in the web of the spider. "Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might inquire of him?" said Jehoshaphat. Yes, there was one more-Micaiah, true, but persecuted. Ahab says, "But I hate him." He was hated because he

was faithful. Wicked men and women do not like to be told the truth; they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. But soon it was shown that this solitary and persecuted prophet was right, and the four hundred fawning prophets were wrong. Ahab went to battle (and Jehoshaphat with him), but not to prosper, as the false men had said he would. God

did not deliver Ramoth-gilead into his hand. On the contrary, a man drawing a bow at a venture, sent the arrow unerringly through an opening in Ahab's armor, and fatally wounded him, "and about the time of the sun going down he died."

Poor, but truehearted, Jehoshaphat cried out to the Lord; he knew where to look in danger and distress.

We cannot conceive Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, saying to another king outside of Israel, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee," etc., as he so blandly replied to Ahab. No! it is an easier matter to discern evil in its open form and character in the world, and thus unhesitatingly to shun it.

Was not Ahab a king of Israel? Could he not say, "Know ye not that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still?" (1 Kings 22:3). Is it not our common enemy who has taken Ramoth-gilead from us? It is here, we repeat, where discernment is needed, for while evil in its true and undisguised character is avoided, evil in its untrue character, so to speak, is often not avoided. Albeit Ahab was king of Israel, the people of the Lord, yet for all that, he was a very wicked man indeed. It is recorded of him that he "did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him." 1 Kings 16:30, 31.

Who would suggest that it was a proper thing for Jehoshaphat to have fellowship with such a wicked man, even if he were king of Israel, the favored people of God? Could anything be more shocking than to go on with wickedness because pursued by those who bear the Lord's name? Far be the thought!

But here it is, alas, that we are so often deceived. Look for a moment at another striking example of how the world in its open form was avoided, while in its disguised form it was fallen into.

The "man of God" (1 Kings 13) was proof against the offers of reward and refreshment of "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin," but proved vulnerable to the deception of the "old prophet in Beth-el." Doubtless, if Jeroboam had declared to the man of God that "an angel spake" to him, he would not have been believed; but he believed the prophet, and he an old one, and believed him to his ruin too. This is a serious matter, yet we need not be discouraged or afraid. If-

"Sin. Satan, death appear,

To harass and appall,

Yet since the gracious Lord is near,

Backward they go and fall.

"Before, behind, around,
They set their fierce, array,
To fight and force me from the ground
Along life's narrow way.

"I meet them face to face,
Through Jesus' conquest blest, March in the triumph of His grace Right onward to my rest."

No less a number than four hundred prophets has assured Ahab and Jehoshaphat that it was not only the Lord's mind that they should go to Ramoth-gilead, but that He would deliver it into the king's hand; yet it is not to be wondered at that Jehoshaphat was dissatisfied with their flippant statement, for had not the Lord permitted a lying spirit to put the words into the mouths of these flattering prophets? If it be asked why the Lord put this lying spirit into their mouths, it must be answered by saying that it was done judicially, and has an analogy to the terrible statement respecting Ephraim, who was "joined to idols," and meant to go on with them at all costs. "Let him alone" (Hos. 4:17). God could not go with Ahab in his undertakings, however commendable they might appear to be, even if Jehoshaphat would accompany him.

One is led to wonder why King Jehoshaphat did not use means to extricate himself from the mess he got himself into. Ah! herein lies a great cause for consideration, which is that the result of an evil alliance and position is to blind the eyes, and to enervate the spiritual energies of the soul. Look what a dragging it took to get Lot out of Sodom! Something of the seductive power of sin must have been known by the poet when he stated-

"Vice is a monster of such hideous mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
But seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

The bell in the tower which when struck alarmed the young birds, alarms them now no longer; they build their nest there; they are used to it. Oh, may our Lord preserve the reader and writer from becoming accustomed to evil! It would appear that there was an abundance of false prophets in Ahab's time; although, not long before, the faithful Elijah had caused four hundred and fifty to be put to death (1 Kings 18:40).

Besides these, there were four hundred more "prophets of the groves" which did eat at Jezebel's table. It is ever so- more false than true. Four hundred false prophets to one. It is a striking disparity, and tells its own story. Yet, blessed be God! He has His precious piece of gold where there is so much brass-His faithful Micaiah, as distinguished from the faithless, flattering, time-serving four hundred. Micaiah, of course, must suffer, but he has God with him, is in communion with Him, and it has been asked, "What can compensate for the loss of communion with God?" It might be said that the four hundred prophets all spoke the same thing; they were unanimous. They were, but it was a unanimity with Satan as its author. Their counsel was taken,

but it was not the counsel God would have been pleased to give. "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of Me." Isa. 30:1.

Doubtless it often proves trying to be singular, but if faithfulness to God is the cause of being singular, may we have grace singular to be.

Ahab did not escape, notwithstanding his cleverness in disguising himself, for "a certain man drew a bow at a venture [in his simplicity], and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness:... and about the time of the sun going down he died." 2 Chron. 18:33, 34.

Through the mercy of the Lord, it is written of Jehoshaphat that he "returned to his house in peace," although not without rebuke, for "the son of Hanani... went out to meet him" and put this important question to the erring, of repentant king, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD," 2 Chron. 19:2.

God had been very gracious to Jehoshaphat. He always is gracious; while rebuking the king, He did not forget that there were "good things" found in him. God in His holiness judges wrongdoing, but does not overlook any good in His people. It is said, "And by Him actions are weighed" (1 Sam. 2:3). God in His grace forgives, but then His ways in government must continue all the same.

Our readers may have heard of the little boy whose conduct so displeased his father that he said he would drive a nail into a post in the garden every time the child was naughty in the future. A considerable number of nails were driven in, alas! After a time, however, a difference became apparent in the boy's behavior; there were kind acts instead of cruel ones, obedient ways instead of disobedient ones, and the father promised to take a nail out of the post every time that he observed these altered and better actions.

Accordingly, one bright day the happy parent took his boy into the garden to see the last nail taken out of that telltale post. The boy was not so pleased as his father expected, and being questioned, he answered, "Father, you have taken away the nails, but you have left all the holes behind!" If the withdrawing of the nails told of the father's forgiveness, the holes showed where the nails had been. So it was with Jehoshaphat; he "returned to his house in peace," but wrath was upon him from before the Lord for being unequally yoked with the ungodly.

When King David exclaimed, "I have sinned," the confession was met with, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin" (2 Sam. 12:13), but we know if grace puts away the sin, government must decree that the sword shall not depart from the house of David. Repentance to be effectual must be heartfelt, yes, and conscience-felt too; and then the fruit of repentance will be seen. Jehoshaphat was now not only desirous of being right with God himself, but we observe that he was desirous of bringing back those he had led astray; for had he not said to ungodly Ahab, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people, and we will be with thee in the war"? But now "he went out again through the people from Beer-sheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers. And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts." 2 Chron. 19:4-7. This sounds wholesome. Jehoshaphat has learned a deep lesson; he now knows what a valuable thing is the fear of the Lord, and how serious a thing it is to act without the

sense of that fear. We fear that a good deal of so-called repentance is very superficial and shallow. It is refreshing to read what the Apostle Paul says of the Corinthians: "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation,... In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." 2 Cor. 7:11.

Have any of our readers left their first love, or are they in danger of leaving it, or are they unequally yoked with unbelievers? Cry to the Lord, for only He can deliver. Jehoshaphat might have used on his restoration, and after having nearly lost his life through backsliding, the words of the Psalm: "Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder." Psalm 107:13, 14.

Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder." Psalm 107:15, 16.

Light Affliction? What Did Paul Call Them?

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor. 4:17, 18.

Some modern prophets exhort us to look at "the bright side of things," so that we may be able to pass comfortably and happily over life's journey. But if they mean things visible, we may lawfully inquire, "Which is the bright side?" And if they mean things invisible, it is all bright there. In the one case, there is nothing but darkness; in the other, there is no darkness at all. If anyone imagines that he can look at the bright side of things that are seen, he is simply under a miserable delusion. There is not so much as a single ray of true light throughout the wide range of this present evil world, of which Satan is the god and prince. How could there be light in a scene from which the Son of God has been cast out? Impossible. To talk of the bright side of things in a region of sin and death, where Satan reigns, and Christ is rejected, is to offer a flat contradiction to the plainest teaching of Holy Scripture.

But we hardly think it needful to press this point just now. Thank God, those who are taught by His Spirit are not in much danger of being drawn aside by any popular delusion as to human progress, or the improvement of the world. With all who have learned to make the cross of Christ the one standard by which to measure men and things - self and the world - this question is definitely, because divinely, settled.

It is very evident that the blessed Apostle knew nothing about the bright side of things. He does not say, "While we look not at the dark side of things." Nothing of the kind. He did not look at them at all. He kept his eye steadily fixed on the unseen things. He lived amid those eternal realities of which the living God is the Source, Christ the Center, and simple faith the power of realization. And herein lay the grand secret of what he tells us in the profound and exquisite passage which stands at the head of this paper. It was this that enabled him to regard a long life of unparalleled toil and suffering as "light affliction" and "but for a moment." Nor this only; it enabled him to see and own that the light and temporary affliction worked for him "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." How striking the contrast between the light and momentary affliction and the weight of glory!

If the reader would form some idea of what the Apostle calls "light affliction," let him turn for a moment to 2 Cor. 11, where, to speak after the manner of men, he is reluctantly obliged to allude to his labors and sufferings in order to bring the poor foolish Corinthians to a right sense of things. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one." And this was "light affliction"! "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep." And all this was "light affliction"! "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren." And all this was "light affliction"!

"In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." And all this was "light affliction"!

Truly, such a record as this may well make us blush to think, much less to speak, of our little trials and difficulties and sorrows and sufferings. And yet the Apostle could not only count them all light, but momentary. But how was this? Was he a stoic? Was he insensible or indifferent? No; he felt it all - could not but feel it. It is the most egregious folly for anyone to say we ought not to feel things. They might just as well tell us we ought not to have a head on our shoulders, a heart in our bosom, or a system of nerves. We may rest assured our Apostle was not one of the visionary school who talk in this way. He was alive to everything, but above it. He felt all, but felt it with God. He was perfectly conscious of the circumstances, but thoroughly superior to them.

But we repeat the question, How was this? What made all that long life of unexampled suffering, toil, and conflict to be regarded as light and momentary? Here is the soul stirring reply: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

Thus it was with Paul, and thus it must be with us. It is this which alone can preserve the balance of the soul while passing through the trials and difficulties, sorrows and conflicts, of this present time. If it were not for this, we could never get on. Were we to look at the things which are seen, we should be crushed in spirit and paralyzed in action. To be insensible is impossible; to be indifferent is contemptible; to be superior is the precious privilege of every Christian. As an old pilgrim, who had reached the advanced age of 103, said in reply to a friend who had made some allusion to all the trials and difficulties of such a very long life, "Yes, yes, there have been trials and difficulties, but I never meddled with them!"

Thus it was with Stephen in that splendid scene at the close of Acts 7. He looked not at the things which were seen. He looked steadfastly up into heaven, and what he saw there rendered him superior to his surroundings; and not only superior to them, but a reflector of Christ in them. Thus it must ever be. It is not a miserable selfishness occupied with trials and trying to escape them, but faith occupied with the Man in the glory, and reflecting the beams of His moral glory upon the scene around.

Living Devotedness

Few Christians realize what an honorable sphere is open to them, of living devotedness to Christ. We have an example of this in Paul—he was ready to die for the name of Jesus. He had nothing more to gain or hope for here. We need more of this earnest devotedness of heart to the Lord. We need to get above the heavy atmosphere in which most Christians live. Our testimony should not be confined to the seasons of united worship, but abroad in the world and among the multitudes of poor dying sinners around, we would seek to testify of Jesus, both by our words and our ways.

How happy we ought to be as Christians! Nothing can make us unhappy if we have a single eye to Christ—calling on the Lord out of a pure heart. It is the want of this which causes much of the nervous depression and lowness of spirits we meet with in many Christians. If Christ were the one object of our hearts, His glory the one thing we had in view, we should not be thinking or caring about ourselves at all. We want just to yield ourselves to the Lord. Isaiah 6 illustrates this. First, the prophet says, "Woe is me," etc. When purged, the word follows, "Here am I; send me." These principles are carried out through the book of Isaiah; the testimony is first to Israel's uncleanness, and then, in the latter days, they appear as the willing messengers to others of the grace of God.

May we know the privilege of living devotedness to Christ! It is an honor to be used of Him. At the same time we must remember that direction is needed as well as devotedness of heart. As on a railroad the steam is the propelling power, but without the rails the train would run into the fields or anywhere else, so the Word is needed to guide our zeal for the Lord.

The Love of Christ

Many Christians spend much of their lives desiring the love of Christ, and still more in desiring to love Christ. "Draw me, we will run after thee." There is love to Christ, but a sense of distance. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" Such expressions as these in the Song of Solomon express the state of many a soul now, as well as they describe the condition of the remnant of Israel in days to come. How many of us have felt a well-known line in a hymn suit the real state of our souls - "Oh, draw me, Savior, after Thee" - and may have wondered why a dear servant of the Lord, more deeply experienced in the love of Christ than ourselves, should have altered it to, "Lord, Thou hast drawn me after Thee." Is not the difference immense?

The difference would not be greater than if you saw a child looking eagerly through a shop window at various kinds of delicious fruit within. Yes, that child loves grapes, and pears, and plums, and greatly desires them, but not one does it enjoy; it is outside, and they are all inside. A kind hand opens the door, and a loving voice says, Come in, my child. Freely I give you all. Eat and enjoy whatever is for your good. How real the difference between the desire of that child, and the enjoyment of the fruit!

And has not that One with the wounded hand opened the door? Or does He leave us outside still, only to desire? It is, or was, the true place of a Jew outside the holiest; he could only earnestly desire. That is not the true place of a Christian. "The King hath brought me into his chambers." "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Is not this the King with the wounded hands? "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." What holy, deep, real enjoyment do these words describe! Is this desire at a distance, looking through the window? No; "I sat"-perfect repose of heart -in the presence of Christ. No fear; no, such perfect love casts out fear. God is love, and that new nature born of Him delights in Him "with great delight." And it is not longing to love Him, but delighting in Him. "And his fruit was sweet to my taste."

Now a very common mistake is often made. It is this: that we must love Him more, and more, and more, until at last we may hope to arrive at this banquet of love. It is not so; it is not an act of our own. "He brought me to the banqueting house." Oh, how tenderly He led me with those wounded hands to the banquet of love! But must it not be our love to Him that makes the banquet of love? No; "His banner over me was love."

Is it not evident then that if we truly "have known and believed the love that God hath to us," we must go beyond "Oh, draw me, Savior, after Thee"? It is quite true in another sense that we need constantly His power to keep us and guide us through this wilderness. But "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Yes, He has not only brought us into the banquet of love, and spread His banner over us, but this is our dwelling, abiding place. Is it not

written, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end"? The banner of love ever floats over us. The fruit is ever sweet. The perfect rest is ever secure. Not a sin did He fail to bear. Never can He cease to love or intercede for those whose sins He bore.

No, the believer has not to desire peace with God, and rest to his soul. "I sat down." He has not too long for repose of soul in the presence of Christ. No, he rests under His shadow in sweet repose. He has not to desire the love of Christ; that love is sweet to his taste. He has not to say, "Oh, draw me"; he is brought into the banqueting house. He can say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies."

There is no effort to love; all is deep, perfect, full enjoyment. A miner in a deep pit, on fire, and about to perish in the suffocating fumes, may well cry out, Oh, draw me out; draw me out into the bright day and pure air. But if a nobleman sent his own son as volunteer to rescue him from that pit of death, and then made him joint heir with that son, of a large estate, his desires would be entirely changed. His one desire would be to be with that one who had saved him, walking and talking with him, sharing all the delights of the estate together.

Is this an overdrawn picture? Far from it. Every illustration fails to set forth the eternal love of God in Christ. "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love." Surely then He could not love us more. "So have I loved you." Mark, we have not to keep His commandments to cause Him to love us, or to attain to His love, but to abide in His love. "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." And why does the Lord thus speak to us? He says further, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." He would not have us remain outside in the continual disappointment of mere desire, but come into the banquet of full joy in the everlasting possession of His love, with the conscience purged, and in perfect repose, through His precious blood; the heart forever satisfied, dwelling in His unchanging love; the affections now free to act and flow forth from Himself to all the objects of His love. For this is the desire of His heart. "This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Have we to desire Him to do this? Surely not. Who could have conceived such a thing? No, God so loved. Jesus so loved. It is done. "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

It will thus be seen by the Christian reader, that we cannot desire Christ to love us. His love to us has been displayed to the utmost. We cannot desire God to love us more than He has loved, or more than He does love. For nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

We may have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Paul had this desire (Phil. 1:23), but this was because he knew the love of Christ to him. We may long and hope for that moment when we shall be like Him in the glorified body, but this is because of the certainty that when He appears we shall be like Him. Yes, we shall see Him as He is, and be like Him. But all this is far different from desiring now that Christ should love us. No, He wishes our present joy to be full, dwelling in His love. He says to the Father, "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved

them, as Thou hast loved Me." John 17:22, 23.

Just think of the glory given to Christ, already given to us. And shortly the world shall know that the Father has loved us, even as He has loved Christ!! Oh, yes, the blessed One, with those wounds in His hands, says, Come unto the banquet; My banner over you is eternal love.

But the reader may say, Ought I not to desire to love God? How plain the answer! If you know and believe this wondrous love of God to you, you will (not desire, but) love Him, because He first loved you. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "We love Him, because He first loved us." As the children of God, we have the nature of our Father, and He is love. Would not that be a strange child that desired to love its parent? And the love of God leads us to delight to keep His commandments. It is the very outflow of the new nature, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. True love is never occupied with self. Desire to love is always so. We may read page after page of those seeking and desiring to love God, and find nothing but self-occupancy, from beginning to end. If you ask them the meaning of those words, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5), their thought will be, The more we love God, the more He will love us. This shows sad ignorance of the great fact declared here.

Believing God, who has raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification," we are justified, accounted righteous, before the very eye of God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." To desire to make peace with God would spoil all. It would be to set aside the peace now made by the blood of Jesus, and thus desire to make peace with God ourselves in some other way. No, it is as certain a fact that we have peace with God, as that He who has made our peace is raised from among the dead. We do not desire peace; we have it WITH GOD. We do not desire access to the banquet of love; we have access by faith into this grace, this wondrous free favor wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

In like manner, though we pass through tribulation, yet we "glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Do not mistake; if the love of God is not shed abroad in your heart, if the Holy Ghost is not given to you, then you are not a Christian, and that is another matter. But if you know and believe the love of God to you in sending His Son, then every barrier to the love of God has been removed. You have not to desire, but the love of God is shed abroad in your heart, the Holy Ghost is given to you. That love is revealed in Christ; cease your vain, unbelieving desires. No longer stand with the doubting crowd without, but take your happy seat beneath His shade in everlasting repose. The Lord bless these few thoughts on the difference between love and desire to every Christian reader, and may we evermore rejoice in the Lord.

The Low Place

We live at a moment in which man is pushing himself upward and onward. "Excelsior" has been used as a popular motto. Let us look well to our mode of interpreting and applying it. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." If we are to be governed by the rule of God's kingdom, we shall find that the only way to get up is to go down. The One who now occupies the very highest place in heaven is the One who voluntarily took the very lowest place on earth. See Phil. 2:5-11.

Here is our example as Christians, and here too the divine antidote against the pride and restless ambition of the men of the world. Nothing is more sad than to witness a pushing, bustling, forward, self-confident spirit and style in those who profess to be followers of Him who was meek and lowly in heart. It is utterly impossible for anyone to indulge in this spirit if ever he has really measured himself in the presence of God. To be much alone with God is the sovereign remedy for pride and self-complacency. May we know the reality of this in the secret of our own souls. May the Lord keep us truly humble in all our ways, simply leaning on Himself, and very, very little in our own eyes.

The Man Whose Eyes Were Opened: Part 1

When God singles out a man from the Old Testament and refers to him three times in the New Testament, there must be some special significance for us-something for us to learn from his history. Such is the case with a man named Balaam. His history is recorded in Numbers 22 to 24, and his death in Numbers 31; in the New Testament he is mentioned in 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation.

"Cursed children: which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness: but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet." 2 Pet. 2:14-16.

"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." Jude 11.

"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." Rev. 2:14.

In these scriptures we have first the way, then the error, and finally the doctrine of Balaam.

The "way" of Balaam was to love money and be willing to curse the people of God provided that he could be enriched thereby.

The "error" of Balaam was to attempt to speak falsely in Jehovah's name for reward.

The "doctrine" of Balaam was the teaching of a method by which Balak could pull the beloved people down from their high eminence by persuading them to leave their own special place of separation and mingle with the Moabites.

In the epistle of Jude, the last days are described; there Balaam is linked with two other men, so that the three together might picture certain moral conditions which would prevail at the end in Christendom. They are "Cain,... Balaam,... and Core." The first man sought to approach God without a suitable offering; he came on the ground of his works, and not that of having a substitute. The second sought to make a gain of speaking the word of God, and the third rose up in rebellion against God's anointed high priest.

These conditions are to be seen all around us. The great religious profession is the religion of Cain. Good deeds, character development, self-improvement, religious ethics, are substituted for the grand work of atonement on the cross. The whole scheme is a denial of the fall and utter ruin of man on the one hand, and of the wondrous truth of the Lord Jesus Christ as the sinner's substitute on the other. What does God say of all those who follow this course? "Woe unto them." And just as surely as Cain's offering was rejected, and he with it, so will these modern religionists be rejected. He will say to them, "I know you not."

The sad fact of the "error of Balaam" being current is that religion has become commercialized, and many mere professors are following in Balaam's error in preaching for the reward. Many of them are as false as Balaam was.

The last character of the last days which is coupled with the "way of Cain" and the "error of Balaam" is the "gainsaying of Core." He was a man who rose up against God's king (Moses; Deut. 33:5), and high priest (Aaron), and is a picture of those who today deny the Lord's authority- they reject Christ's authority while claiming to be Christians. In other words, it is infidelity clothed in the garb of religion. How prevalent it is! Surely we should be able to discern the signs of these times.

But let us turn back to the book of Numbers, and I think we shall learn some profitable lessons from the history of Balaam. He was a wicked man, a false prophet, who was -willing to sell his services to King Balak. He had a reputation as a prophet, for Balak said to him, "I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou curses is cursed" (Numb. 22:6). He was not a prophet of the Lord, but was a sorcerer using divination; however, the Lord did take him up and use him, and that contrary to his own will and to the will of Balak. The Word of God gives us a number of instances where He used unregenerate men to speak His mind; for instance, Caiaphas the high priest, the man who took the lead in having Jesus crucified, prophesied "that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:51, 52)-

Balak the king had much reason to be distressed when he saw the progress of the great multitude of Israelites swarming toward his land. He knew how they had victoriously left Egypt, and what they had done to the Amorites. He did not, however, take into account that Jehovah was with them, nor seek their favor, nor cast in his lot with them; instead, he sent the honorable elders of Moab with the elders of Midian to persuade this renowned prophet of Midian to come and curse Israel. When they went, they took "the rewards of divination in their hand."

Balaam received them, lodged them courteously, and cunningly made it appear difficult to enlist his services, and also made a display of seeking supernatural guidance, even. to using the name of Jehovah-the name by which God was known in Israel-to parry their offers for a time. He wanted money, and perhaps the charge for his services went up with his delay.

God spoke to him that night and told him that he was not to go with the elders of Moab, nor was he to curse the Israelites, for they were blessed. Balaam then grudgingly declined their proffered gifts, saying, "The LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you." This statement made it apparent to the elders that as far as Balaam was concerned he was willing. Whereupon, Balak sent "princes, more, and more honorable" than the first to persuade the wily Balaam to come. They were empowered to offer him greater and greater rewards.

This time God permitted Balaam to accompany the elders, but warned him that He would not allow him to speak anything but what He wished. God was about to use the enemies of Israel for their blessing. With God's permission, the false prophet readily acted, for he "loved the wages of unrighteousness."

But before Balaam was allowed to proceed very far the angel of the Lord stood in the way of the ass upon which he was riding; but Balaam did not see the angel, and smote the ass. This occurred three times; then the ass spoke with a man's voice, rebuking him; whereupon the angel of the Lord

told Balaam that his way was perverse before Him, and again warned the covetous prophet that he was not to speak anything but that which God gave him to speak. It took much preparation by God to use the false prophet's mouth to pronounce good concerning Israel.

God may use a dumb ass or a wicked man to speak His truth, but they are only instruments of His power, and the credit is not to them. He has used unsaved men to tell others the way of salvation, to their eternal blessing. God is sovereign and can use what and whom He will, but that in no wise lessens the servant's responsibility to do as he is told.

At length Balaam arrived in the land of Moab, and King Balak took him up to a prominence from whence he could see Israel encamped below. Balaam felt, however, that he should make a great show of seeking hidden wisdom from some supernatural source. While it had the appearance of seeking God, it was really Satan's counterfeit of what God had established-something that was done by dealers in the occult sciences of the day. He had Balak prepare seven altars and their offerings, and then he went away alone to seek some special revelation. Here God met him and put words into his mouth, which he had already learned he MUST speak. Let us listen:

"And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Chap. 23:7-10.

The children of Israel were God's earthly people, a chosen nation on earth, but there are some principles here that can well be applied to Christians-the heavenly people. Actually, this man Balaam wanted to curse the people of God for the gain he would make, but he is forced to say, "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?" Any curse of his would be meaningless and useless when God had not cursed them. This brings to mind a verse in Romans 8: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" No one, not even Satan, can touch the people of God in their security. The devil may for a time be allowed by God, for purposes of good toward His people, to touch them in their earthly circumstances, but to curse them is impossible. Surely "if God be for us, who can be against us?" This is self-evident. Our distress of spirit in times of trial really springs from lack of believing that God is for us. Jacob, at the very moment when God was moving all for his good, said, "All these things are against me." And have we not all more or less echoed the thoughts of Jacob? But what does it matter if the whole world be against us, when God is for us?

It is important to notice where Balaam was called to behold this people-"From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him." God beholds them from His eminence, and Balaam is compelled to see them from above also. O that we always beheld one another as God sees us in Christ! How differently we would feel at times. What harsh and unkind words would be spared if we thought of the people of God as viewed from above.

Next Balaam says, "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." This is a cardinal truth, forever since God called Abraham to a path of separation, the

people of God have been called to walk apart from the world. Even before the time of Abraham, we find in Genesis 5 a line of faith - men who were perhaps little esteemed by the world of their day, but they "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and "died in faith." There was another line of people, mentioned in Genesis 4-descendants of Cain-who did great things and made a name in the earth. But those in the line of faith generally were not prominent in secular history.

Israel's distinctive glory was their separation to God. They were not the largest nation, nor did they have giants among them; if they were to boast, they were to boast in the Lord, for He was their glory. When they mingled with the nations they fell from their exalted place. Christians are not now called out as a special nation, but God is taking out of the nations a people for His name. They are not of the world, even as Christ was not of it. He was so separated and apart from the whole world system that when He left it there was scarcely a ripple on the surface of their society. The organized system of that day was hostile to Him, and He said it would be the same to His followers; but He said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And how did He overcome? By walking in communion with His Father so that He was neither elated by their fleeting acclamations nor depressed by their rejection. May God grant us to be of that mind, so that we shall neither seek a place in man's world, nor bemoan it when we are made to feel its scorn and derision.

"Nay, let the world cast out our name,

And vile account us if it will."

Balaam is moved to add at the close of his first prophesy: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" This he never achieved, for he died as he lived, a wicked man. He was slain by Israel among their enemies (Numb. 31:8). It is a vain wish for one to desire to die as a righteous man, and yet remain a rebel against God. Many today hope to go to heaven when they die, but they prefer to live for the earth, with no thought of God. Their wish shall perish with them.

The Man Whose Eyes Were Opened: Part 2

Balak was much displeased with Balaam for what he uttered, and continued his attempts to get the people cursed. He took Balaam to another vantage point from which he could see the Israelites, hoping that he would curse them from there. Again Balaam went through his ritual, and notice that in the 15th verse Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here by thy burnt offering while I meet... yonder." The words "the LORD" are in italics in the King James Version, showing that they were added by the translators. They were not in the original Hebrew. Balaam did not here speak of meeting Jehovah, but of going to meet with some evil spirit. It was a typical act of occult diviners of that day. However, the Lord did meet Balaam and put the words in his mouth that he was to speak to Balak. Let us listen to what he has to say:

"Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" No, there would be no disannulling what God had said. As the poet has said:

"When once His word is passed,

When He has said, 'I will,'

The thing shall come at last,

God keeps His promise still."

Neither Balaam nor Balak nor all the hosts of hell could change God's decree concerning His people Israel; nor can "death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,... separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8:38, 39. Every purpose and promise of God concerning us will be fulfilled; nothing shall fail of all the good things which the Lord has spoken.

Balaam then continues, "I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." Evidently he would have reversed it if he could, but he had been warned most solemnly not to do so when he was withstood by the angel and reproved by the dumb ass. Satan and many ungodly persons would gladly curse the saints of God today, and there is a man coming who will "blaspheme... God,... and them [the saints] that dwell in heaven" in his rage, but all to no avail.

Balaam's first prophecy contained negative truth: God had not cursed the people, so Balaam could not. His second utterance gave positive truth: God had blessed them, and that could not be reversed. Just so we read in the New Testament of both negative and positive blessing; for example, John 3:16 says that the believer in Jesus shall not perish, on the one hand, and shall have everlasting life on the other.

Dear fellow-Christians, if God blessed Israel of old, how exceedingly more has He blessed us. It is good to stop and consider how many and great are our blessings. In Ephesians 1 we are told that we are blessed with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." There is not a saint, however feeble, who does not have every blessing God can give him, in Christ. May we have a deepened sense of how God has manifoldly blessed us, and that not all the evil designs and power of men and demons can affect these blessings.

Next Balaam says, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." What a statement! If Balaam had been down in Israel's tents, he might have heard them murmuring and complaining, but if God had not beheld iniquity, who is going to make Him do so? The enemy would gladly accuse them before God, but

"Though the restless foe accuses,

Sins recounting like a flood,

Every charge our God refuses,

Christ has answered with His blood."

It was not apparent in Old Testament times how God could behold a people like the Israelites and not see iniquity. Christ had not yet died, and the gospel had not yet been proclaimed; but there were those who had some sense of the forgiveness of God. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man. unto whom God imputeth righteousness without saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Rom. 4:6-8. In Old Testament times God looked forward to the work of Christ while He dealt in grace with those who had faith. Now He beholds the believer in Jesus as "clean every whit." More than that, He sees us in Christ, in His beauty.

O that we saw one another more as God sees us. I am afraid that we often drop down to a lower plane when we think of our brethren in Christ. We see their crotchets. Sometimes their dispositions cross with ours, and we become annoyed and irritated, forgetting what they are in all their loveliness in Christ. Naturally we do see some things with them that are not very pleasant, but let us not forget that they see things in us which are not what they should be. May our eyes be open to see our brethren as God sees them, as those dear to Him, and precious to the heart of Christ. O to see one another from the "top of the rocks"!

To Balak's consternation, Balaam continues to enlarge on Israel's blessing: "The LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; he bath as it were the strength of a unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What bath God wrought!" vv. 21-23. God was with them, and God had acted for them, and He had wrought all for their blessing. What a blessed people they were! Strange that they should ever forsake Him and turn to other gods! But is it not stranger still that we who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and have been accepted in the Beloved, should seek our satisfaction apart from Him whose we are?

By that time Balak was exasperated with Balaam, and said to him, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all." But if the enemy made God step in and speak for them, he must hear still more.

Balaam replied, "All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do." Thereupon Balak made one more attempt to get the people cursed. What utter folly!

The first verse of chapter 24 is enlightening as to the character of Balaam. "And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness." This lets us know definitely that he had merely been in the habit of seeking enchantments from Satan, and that his display of seeking God's guidance was a sham. Then Balaam spoke.

"Balaam the son of Beor said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: he hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open." Chap. 24:3, 4. His eyes had been opened, but against his will. He heard the "words of God," and "saw the vision of the Almighty," and his heart was unchanged. How much more was his guilt than if his eyes had not been opened.

Then he says, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters." vv. 5, 6.

Balaam's third parable continues the advance noted in the two previous ones: first, they could not be cursed, for God had not cursed them; second, God had blessed them, and they would be blessed; third, they were to be seen in their beauty as trees of the Lord's planting. What an advance! Now God would tell their enemies of their beauty and loveliness, and all was the fruit of His doings. And when God tells how He has accepted us, He says, "accepted [taken into favor] in the beloved." How precious is that! Not accepted in Christ, though that is true, but accepted in that One in whom He delights. Nothing can be higher than that.

But poor Balaam had to say, "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh." How dreadful for a man to have his eyes opened and to resist the light and revelation. All such will assuredly see Christ as their judge one day, but then be banished from His presence. They, like Balaam, will have no part in the blessing which they witnessed for others.

The Man Whose Eyes Were Opened: Part 3

Another point we may notice in this parable of Balaam's is, "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." This was to pronounce his own and Balak's judgment, for they sought to curse Israel, but they themselves would be cursed.

Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together and upbraided him; but Balaam reminded Balak that he told him when he came that he could not go beyond the word of the Lord. After this Balaam prepared to depart to his own land, but under the influence of the power of God he was made to give Balak one more parable. This one was of Israel's future glory and power, for out of Jacob a Star was to rise, and a Scepter out of Israel; "and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth... and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city." Num. 17-19.

It is thought that the wise men from the east that came to see the child Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 2, knew of this prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that they connected it with the bright star which they had seen. But that blessed One who came of Israel is yet to reign and put down all His enemies, and Israel shall be blessed under Him in that day.

There is much for our meditation in this last prophecy of Balaam's, for it looks forward to the end of this age, and the judgments that shall fall. In language descriptive of the Great Tribulation it says, "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!" It also predicts that the last scourge of Israel (the Assyrian) will be afflicted by a Western maritime power, and then the Western power will perish (v. 24).

Thus we see that the enemy was merely used by God to bring out His own purposes of good toward Israel, looking to the' ultimate blessing 'Under the Messiah. All enemies will be subdued, and 'Christ will reign gloriously. How often we see that prophecy leads us on to the coming and reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is, alas, a melancholy turn in the account of the next chapter. The Israelites, those of whom all these blessings were described, began to intermingle with the Moabites, those enemies of God's people-those who sought to have them cursed.

"And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye everyone his men that were joined unto Baal-peor." Chap. 25:1-5.

Now connect this with a verse in Numbers 31:

"Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD." v. 16.

Here we see what Balaam's counsel was. This wicked man, a man whose eyes had been opened and willfully closed, when he saw that he could not curse the people, counseled Balak how to deceive them. What the enemy could not do with open assault, he would accomplish by stealth. This unfolds the true state of Balaam, for we might have hoped that he was changed by the revelations which he had. But the crafty man knew that if he could get the people to intermarry and then come to the idolatrous feasts, he would bring them down in their practice from the exalted place in which they stood, and then they would reap God's governmental dealings.

Now it is precisely here that we have to be on our guard. Nothing can ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, We are a people of God's choosing and blessing- a heavenly people too. But the enemy would tell us that it is not too bad if we mingle with the world, and join in its pursuits.

In the Lord's address to the church in Pergamos, we read, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." This period of the Church's history, depicted by Pergamos, is that wherein the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire, and the Church and the world formed an unholy alliance. There were some men who taught that this was not bad-but the Lord tells us it was the doctrine of Balaam. It is to tell the saints that there is nothing wrong in unholy association with the world. And it is on every hand today. It is the warp and woof of present-day Christendom.

How terribly sad it is when such bad counsel comes from the lips of true children of God. Some have openly advised young Christians to join fraternities and earthly societies of one kind and another, when God has said, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Through bad counsel, even from Christians, many dear young believers have kept company with unbelievers, only to end in an unholy marriage, a 'linking of light and darkness. Dear young Christian, please remember that all such counsel comes from the enemy of your soul; it has a deeper source than the lips of the one who gives it. And if you follow the counsel of Balaam, you will reap sore disappointment from the world, and the government of God in your life.

The devil can never frustrate the purposes of God to bless us. He can never keep us out of heaven, or take away one blessing which we have in Christ up there; but he can spoil your joy and mine, and ruin our testimony for the Lord, if we follow the counsel of Balaam. The word "fornication" in Revelation 2 has reference to an unholy alliance between the people of God and the world-a mixture of holy and unholy. Our happiness depends on walking in the good of all that God has given us. May the blessings bestowed on us, and the glories that await us, so captivate our hearts that the world will have no appeal to us. May the language of the hymn be the expression of our hearts:

"O worldly pomp and glory,

Your charms are spread in vain;

I've heard a sweeter story,
I've found a truer gain.
Where Christ a place prepareth,
There is my loved abode;
There shall I gaze on Jesus,
There shall I dwell with God."

Let us not trust in our own hearts, "for he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Pro. 28:26. We have an old nature which is susceptible to the counsel of Balaam. And dear young Christians, beware of the little things. Great matters turn on little affairs. The bait may be small, but the hook is large. It is the small edge of the wedge that enters first. The enemy of our souls would like to draw us away from faithful devotedness to Christ, and he will use any means that he thinks will succeed.

There are many practical applications that could be made of shunning the counsel of Balaam. But we leave it to the reader to make his own application in the matters of his daily life. Anything that will draw you away from Christ in heart, anything that will make you compromise the truth, anything that is contrary to the Word of God - shun it. The world is more to be feared when it smiles on us than when it hates us. "The kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Perhaps the devil would dangle financial advantage, or social advance, or any one of a thousand things before your eyes. May God give the reader and the writer spiritual perception to see the tempter's hand in these offers, even though disguised like Jacob's when Isaac said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." Gen. 27:22.

There was One who trod this path before us who never wavered for an instant in faithful devotedness to His Father, and in entire separation from the scene through which He passed. He began and finished the path of faith in all perfection (Heb. 12:1). May we keep our eyes steadfastly on Him.

"O Lord, when we the path retrace
Which Thou on earth hast trod,
To man Thy wondrous love and grace,
Thy faithfulness to God;
"Thy love, by man so sorely tried,
Proved stronger than the grave;
The very spear that pierced Thy side
Drew forth the blood to save.
"Faithful amidst unfaithfulness,
'Mid darkness only light,

Thou didst Thy Father's name confess,
And in His will delight.

"Unmoved by Satan's subtle wiles,
Or suffering, shame, and loss,
Thy path, uncheered by earthly smiles,
Led only to the cross.

"We wonder at Thy lowly mind,
And fain would like Thee be,
And all our rest and pleasure find
In learning, Lord, of Thee."

The Manna

"And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." Josh. 5:12.

"He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:57, 58).

Manna was the food of Israel in the wilderness. It was the divine provision for them for the term of their wanderings-"The children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited: they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan." Exod. 16:35. It fell morning by morning, and they gathered early, and according to their eating. It was found where had been the dew of heaven that fell around the camp- "When the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing" (v. 14). The barren wilderness received upon its face the dew, and where the moisture, collecting invisibly and falling from above, lodged upon the ground, God spread the angels' food for man - He gave them "bread from heaven" to eat. The Spirit of God, through whom Christ is presented to us, and Christ our food, are thus before us. "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven" (John 6:33), and we find Him, we may say, where the Holy Spirit presents Him to us. The Christian's food, as he traverses this wilderness, is not of the earth, but from and of heaven. Our spiritual sustenance here is to be gathered diligently day by day, early in the morning before the sun is up, and the day of our toil is upon us.

In the wilderness Israel gathered the manna according to their several needs. Jehovah provided for them according to the measure of their requirements. Thus too do we receive of Christ. We hunger, and find Christ to supply our daily wants; and ever the diligent hand, the early seeker, receives a peculiar blessing. They "gathered, some more, some less"; they gathered, not according to the abundance of the divine supply, but "every man according to his eating" (Exod. 16:17, 18). How true is this principle regarding soul hunger, for what different appetites for heavenly things have God's people! Some find half an hour over the Bible a long time; others meditate therein day and night. Yet, while this is so of us, when all the gathered manna was measured, it was "an omer for every man"-every man had sufficient; every man's need was absolutely met, for the measure was the satisfaction of every man.

In Canaan Israel ate the corn of the land, the native food of Canaan-the exhaustless supply, as we may express ourselves, of the promised possession. The corn of the land, like the manna for the wilderness, is a figure to us of Christ, the food of His people; but in the corn we have the abiding supply of heaven itself before us, Christ risen from the dead, and for the measure of the supply, not the need of a hungering saint on earth, but Himself in His exhaustless fullness. In the four gospels we see Christ as the manna, Jesus on earth, and walking among men; in those scriptures which present Him as the glorified and ascended Son of God, we see Him as the corn of the land. Ever and always the same Jesus, but in the one case coming down to our need; in the other, in the

glory of God.

The measure of the manna that fell in the wilderness was according to the daily need of Israel! day by day there was enough for every one of all the host, and not one single soul was forgotten in the divine reckoning. God in His loving care counted His people, and provided exactly every morning for them according to their numbers. Most cheering is this consideration. Every single saint on earth, whatever his soul hunger, has only to go to Christ; little children and aged believers - all have this gracious word, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger" (John 6:35). The measure of the corn in Canaan was the abundance of the land itself -the honey, the wheat, the oil and wine, all that Canaan produced. As we apprehend what Christ is in Himself as the corn of the land, our souls enter into a wealth of immeasurable blessing and fullness. His fullness, not our need, is thus before our souls. Christ as risen from the dead is our portion. Let us seek to know Him as He is; and the more of Him we lay hold of, the more we shall say there is to be laid hold of-His glories, His grace, His love, are exhaustless.

Apprehending Christ as the corn of the land, and feeding on Him in His exhaustless fullness, will in no way deprive us of zeal in searching for Him daily for our ever recurring need. Though the manna ceased for Israel when they ate of the corn of Canaan, the manna ceases not for us as long as we are on the earth. We need Him every day and every hour, and as much at the end as at the beginning of our journey. We are spiritually both in the wilderness and in Canaan; we are partakers on earth of the heavenly calling, and we are seated in Christ in the heavenly places. The enjoyment of the favors of God to us, in the heavenly places in Christ, enhances the sense of His favors to us as in the wilderness. Grace never displaces grace, nor does one divine favor mitigate against another; all God's ways are perfect, and every token of His grace adds luster to that grace. A believer setting up one glory of the favor of God against another, is like a man beholding the full displayed glories of the heavens above him on a clear night, and despising the beauties of some stars because they differ from others in glory.

For a few days Israel had the food of the wilderness in Canaan, but the harvest enjoyed by them, the manna ceased. When we reach glory we shall not need the present daily supply of grace, for we shall be with Christ. We shall see Him as He is. We shall apprehend Him in heaven. Exhaustless blessing will be ours forever. His fullness will be our endless portion; we shall ever be satisfied, and we shall ever find our joy in Him.

A Warning About Marriage

A WARNING ABOUT MARRIAGE

Our reply to your letter is summed up in that pointed inquiry of the prophet, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Let nothing induce you to link yourself with one who is not one with you in the things of the Lord. Think not that you will bring him to see with you after you have taken the false step. As well might you think of pulling a person out of a morass, by plunging into the morass yourself. How could you expect to set another right by going wrong yourself? Shall we do evil that good may come? We hold it to be a fatal mistake for two to come together who are not of one heart and one mind as to Christ and His cause.

The "Me" Did It

What grace and wisdom are needed when visiting the sick, so that the right word may be spoken. Especially when addressing the unconverted, a place should be taken side by side with them in a spirit of humility and tender sympathy. We who are Christians and seek thus to serve the Lord should remember that once we were "without Christ... in the world," quite as far from God as any other poor sinner to whom we may speak, and that we owe all that we have, and all that we are, to sovereign mercy, which has called us out and blessed us. The following little incident will illustrate this.

During the summer, a lady who was staying in a country town used to purchase fruit and vegetables at a store, the owner of which was always glad to have an opportunity of talking a little if a customer would stay to hear her. One day this woman told her of a Christian who had recently left the town. "I shall never forget him," said she, "for he was the means of saving my husband who was sick for seventeen weeks. During that time Mr. W. came very often to see him. Once when he was explaining to my poor husband about sin, he says to him, 'We are all sinners, you and me,' and," added the woman, "the 'me' did it. If he had said, 'you' are a sinner, my husband would not have listened to him; he would not even have let him stay in his room!"

The poor invalid evidently had a proud, unbroken spirit, but the good Christian visitor humbly took his place with him, as by nature a sinner, only with this difference-that one was a sinner unsaved, and the other was a sinner saved by grace. "The 'me' did it."

The Midnight Cry

The Lord is coming! Most blessed, yet most solemn truth? The midnight cry has gone forth, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Far and near the cry is sounding. Loud and clear and long it rings through the midnight air, and the virgins are being aroused from their careless and guilty slumbers. Have you heard the cry? Has your heart answered to it? Are your loins girded? Is your light burning? Do you know Christ as the heavenly Bridegroom? and are you waiting for Him in the joyous expectation of going "in with him to the marriage"?

The Bridegroom is coming! Most plainly has God spoken in His Word about this great event. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." We are called to hear the very words of God. It is God Himself who speaks, and woe be to those who despise His word. "Incline your ear, and come unto Me," He says; "Hear, and your soul shall live." Let us then bend our ear to God, and hear His word to us at this solemn moment when the midnight cry is calling forth the virgins afresh to meet the coming Bridegroom.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." Matt. 25:1. This well describes the first condition of the professing church, while the heavenly hope of the saints still shone bright in their hearts. Christian Jews went forth from the camp of Judaism, and converted Gentiles left their dumb idols, to wait for God's Son from heaven, who had said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "I WILL COME AGAIN." This was the blessed hope of the saints. This the blessed Lord set before the Jewish disciples when He was about to leave them, and it was the comfort of their poor sorrowing hearts.

They had been drawn to His Person; they had marked the unfoldings of the divine, eternal life in Him as a man among men; they had seen, heard, touched, and handled the Word of life; they had seen the outgoings of eternal love manifested in Him; they had seen Him pressing on to the cross, and meeting the storm of human hatred and Satanic malice; they had seen Him bow His holy head under the tempest of divine judgment, as the bearer of their sins; they had seen Him risen again from the dead, victorious over death and all the power of Satan, presenting to their wondering eyes His pierced hands and side as the proof that it was Himself, their risen and victorious Savior; they had gathered around Him on the Mount of Olives, and heard His parting words, and seen His hands uplifted to bless them as He ascended up to heaven; and now, as the cloud received Him out of their sight, and they still stood gazing up into heaven, the men in white apparel assured them that this same Jesus should so come in like manner as they had seen Him go up into heaven. This was their blessed hope, their comfort, their joy. He was but gone to prepare a place for them, and would come again and receive them to Himself.

What was the effect of all they had seen and heard? They were drawn to His blessed Person, and their hearts slave to Him in love. The manifestation of eternal and divine love had bound them to Him; and as He ascended, their hearts followed Him on high. All the links that bound them to the

world that had crucified Him were broken. Their links were with Him, and every chord of their hearts vibrated with holy joy at the words, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." He was coming again, and they went forth to meet the Bridegroom!

But this same Jesus was preached to the Gentiles also, and preached, not only as a Savior to deliver them from the wrath to come, but as the One who would gather His own around Himself, and usher them into the deep, eternal blessedness of the Father's house. This was their blessed hope. The Thessalonian saints were turned from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. And if the enemy brought in confusion of thought as to those who fell asleep before the coming of the Lord, the Apostle would not leave them in ignorance. He would let them know that those who fell asleep would not miss the blessing and glory of the kingdom. God would bring them all with Christ. But there is a preliminary event necessary to take place before this can be accomplished. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thess. 4:16-17. Thus, when all the saints have been caught up to meet the Lord, and to be forever with Him, then God can bring them all with Him, as His coheirs, to enter upon their inheritance, and fill their predestined place in the kingdom and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such was the hope and such was the state of the Church when it was in the freshness of first love; but

"THE BRIDEGROOM TARRIED"

Many centuries have passed since He said to His disciples, "Watch." Why has He tarried? Is it because He is slack concerning His promise? How could anyone think this of Jesus, who died upon the cross in self-sacrificing love, that He might be the "Amen"-the verifier of all God's promises? "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3:9. Ah! this is the wondrous secret of His having tarried so long. God is gathering a heavenly bride for Christ, and divine love still lingers over the lost in long-suffering patience; and one and another and another are being brought to repentance, and screened under the sheltering blood of the Lamb from the awful storm of coming judgment. And while the activities of divine love have been displayed in reconciling men to God, the time has not grown long to Him, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Ought the time to have grown long to us? Ah, if the saints had been in communion with their Savior, and followed the outgoings of His heart as the great Shepherd of the sheep, they would have been but too willing to suffer and toil and wait, without counting the time long. They would not have forgotten their hope; but, having the secret of His heart, they would have kept the word of His patience. But alas!-

"WHILE THE BRIDEGROOM TARRIED, THEY ALL

SLUMBERED AND SLEPT"

The hope of the Lord's coming ceased to be an immediate hope. The wicked servant said in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming," and then began "to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and

drink with the drunken." Through how many centuries has the church slumbered and slept, and the evil servant done his own will! Alas! the church-the great professing body-instead of keeping herself as a chaste virgin espoused to Christ, gave up the hope of His coming, and played the harlot with the kings of the earth.

But the Lord is coming; as it is said, "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." But does He want to come and find a sleeping bride, a bride not expecting her Bridegroom? Ah, no. He will have the saints, in conjunction with the Spirit, saying "Come." He will have bridal affections in the saints answering to His own imperishable love. And think of the grace that has sent out the heralding cry, "BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM...; GO YE OUT TO MEET HIM"-the cry that has aroused the slumbering virgins and made them trim their lamps.

Have you heard this cry? Are you awake? Have you trimmed your lamp? Is it burning for Christ? O sleeper, awake, awake, awake! The Lord is coming-surely coming, and coming quickly! Awake from your midnight slumber! trim your lamp, and be ready!

But have you heard the cry, perhaps, and trimmed your lamp, and it is "gone out"; you have taken no oil in your vessel. So it is in the parable. "They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." There must be the oil of the Holy Ghost-the power of divine light in the soul-in order to have a place in that glorious procession that will light our coming Bridegroom in to the marriage.

Dear reader, will you have a place in that wondrous throng? Do you know redemption? Have your sins been washed away in the blood of the Lamb? Have you been sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise? Remember, the mere lamp of profession 'will not do. You must have the oil; and you must get this now, while it is the day of grace. When the Master rises up and shuts the door, it will be too late. Now is the accepted time. Will you not seek the oil now? Christ will give it to you. You cannot get it from the wise virgins; they have it only for themselves. You must get it from Christ. He alone can supply your need. And He sells "without money and without price." You cannot buy it otherwise. The Holy Ghost is the gift of Christ (as Christ was the gift of God the Father) to all those who believe the gospel of salvation. Having accomplished redemption by His death on the cross, Christ was exalted to the right hand of God the Father, and received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, which He shed forth in power on the day of Pentecost. This is the oil for the virgins' vessels- the oil that sustains the light of Christ in the soul amid the darkness of this world's night. Have you received this oil? Your lamp will be worthless indeed unless you have the oil to keep it burning. If you have not the oil, you will be left outside forever and ever to bewail your fatal neglect. Oh, be wise and take the oil which Christ freely gives to all who come to Him. Believe in Christ, whose precious blood cleanses from all sin, that you may receive the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and be numbered among the wise who took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT." Reader, on which side of that door will you be when that solemn moment arrives? Will you be inside to share the wondrous joys of that blood-washed throng? or will you be outside, to join the cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," only to hear the crushing answer, "I know you not"!

What a moment that will be when the Lord comes and takes away His own which are in the world! What a separation will take place then! All the saints will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air; while the despisers of the gospel will be left behind, to fall under the awful delusion of Satan, and be carried away in that terrible apostasy in which "the man of sin" will be deified and worshiped in the very temple of God, "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thess. 2:12.

Too suddenly and swiftly, it may be, for human eyes to see, yet with divine certainty the separation will take place. Every believer will be taken away; every rejecter of Christ will be left behind. Education, rank, wealth, social position, will have nothing to do in deciding who shall be caught up, and who shall be left behind. All turns on whether men have believed the witness of God, and received the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, or whether they have despised God's Word and rejected His Son. The separation is between believers and unbelievers, and takes place among all classes and conditions of men-high and low, rich and poor, great and small. Wherever they are, in whatever employ, in city or country, house or field, believers are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they ever be with the Lord.

In one part of the globe it is morning. The morning light has dawned, and the sun has risen, and all seems the same as yesterday. The family are in their accustomed seats at the table, and all are partaking of the morning meal. Suddenly one and another are missed. They have vanished in a moment, and no earthly call can bring them back. They have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

In another part of the globe the inhabitants are at their daily occupations. There also the great separation takes place. In a moment God's people vanish from earth-some from the streets of the city, some from behind the counter, some from the workshop, some from the field. Calls are unanswered, and all search in vain. They have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

In another part of the globe it is evening. The work of the day and the evening meal are over. Some of God's people, perhaps mingled with the family circle, are, with the others, talking over the affairs of the day; some are at the prayer meeting; some, perhaps, are preaching the gospel to sinners, and pleading with men to be reconciled to God; or, it may be, themselves listening to the old, old story they loved so well. Suddenly, and quickly as the lightning's flash, the summons comes, and as quickly all the saints are gone. The saint whose voice was just heard in the family circle is seen no more; the voice heard in prayer and supplication is silent; the servant of God proclaiming the word of reconciliation suddenly vanishes from the sight of his hearers; those who just now were listening with delight to the old, old story, or the teaching of God's blessed truth, have gone to behold the face of Him whom having not seen they loved. The saints have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

In another part of the globe it is night. The inhabitants are wrapped in midnight slumber, but the Lord Himself descends from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and every saint answers to the heavenly call. The unsaved husband, or the unsaved wife, is left behind and, it may be, slumbers on till morning, or awakes in the night to find the loved companion gone, and the children too, who had been taught the fear of the Lord by the faithful mother or father. Everywhere the separation goes on, all classes are divided; all relationships are

broken. O moment of awful desolation to the unsaved! From field and city, counting-house and workshop, stately mansion and lowly hamlet, royal palace and poor man's cottage, a cry more terrible than the cry of Egypt on the night when the first-born were slain-a cry of anguish and despair ascends to heaven, "Lord, Lord, open to 'us.'" But alas! it is too late! too late! "They that were READY went in with him to the marriage, AND THE DOOR

WAS SHUT"!

And now what is the conclusion of the whole matter? "Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour." "Times and seasons" there will be for the waiting Jews after the Church is gone, but there are none for us. The Lord may come today, or He may come tomorrow. He may come at morn, or noon, or night. The one solemn word He left ringing in the ears of His disciples was "Watch." "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." "Blessed are those servants."

Who can tell the unutterable blessedness and joy of those who have waited and watched for Christ, and who shall be fashioned into His glorious likeness at His coming! "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). And what is the power of this wondrous hope? "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." We shall be like Him then; we want to be like Him now, purifying ourselves even as He is pure. Shall we then not cultivate bridal affections in our hearts, and keep ourselves (as a chaste virgin espoused to Christ) unspotted from the world? Shall He find us walking with defiled garments? walking with the world that crucified Him, and now coldly rejects His message of grace? Are we members of its societies, guests at its pleasure parties, attendants at its theaters, companions of those who by these things drown the voice of God in the conscience? He who was the light of the world is gone, crucified, and cast out. And now it is night-the long desolate night of His absence. Shall we seek shelter and comfort and carnal ease where He was slain? May we rather cleave to Him with undivided affections, enduring the cold chill of the night, and keeping our lamps burning brightly till He comes. Let us go forth to meet the Bridegroom. "Surely I come quickly" are His blessed words of cheer to our lonely and waiting hearts. Let the sound tremble on the chords of our hearts, making melody there to Him whose heart will never be satisfied until He has us with Himself; and let us wait for that moment when His heart and ours shall be mutually satisfied - when "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." "Amen... come, Lord Jesus."

Miracles

It is very simple but important to see that miracles do not necessarily imply the setting aside laws. Man produces effects previously unknown by him - change them he cannot. The only difference is that man uses the laws themselves as force to produce the effect; God, the fiat of His will. He may act beyond laws without setting aside any existing one, because He can quicken and create. But the argument that there are laws, and God would not set aside His own, is perfectly without force. Laws which bind nature, I admit; laws which bind God, I do not.

The Mode of Warfare

Josh. 6:6-21

The action of Israel as the army of God begins immediately after the command is given by the Prince of the host of Jehovah. Up to this point the book of Joshua describes God's work in bringing His people into Canaan, and giving them of its food preparatorily to their active service in war. So the establishment of the Christian in grace is of necessity antecedent to his being an effective soldier of Christ. God's work for the believer must be rested in, and His work in him must be unhindered, before the soldier of Christ is fit to fight for Him. A child of God, doubting his sonship, or engaged in spiritual struggles with himself, is not an effective soldier of Christ. He may wear the uniform, but he is unable to take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and wield it in the might of the Lord; for, so long as "I" is the burden of the soul, offensive warfare is impossible. "What I would, that do I not," "but the evil which I would not, that I do," is the expression of inward struggling to be free, and a proof that the standing in Christian liberty, without which spiritual conflict cannot be waged, is still not enjoyed.

Again, if Christian liberty be known as a matter of faith, through grace, there must be holy living in order to maintain spiritual conflict. A right state before God is requisite, as well as faith in our being blessed in Christ. Subjection to God and obedience to the Scriptures are necessities for true Christian warfare. We must walk with God if we would war for God. Suppose the Spirit who indwells us is striving with us because our ways are not pleasing to God, could we be truly contending for God at such a moment? Impossible. There may be a semblance of true conflict in such a case, but it will be but the semblance. Christian soldiership demands that there should be both faith in what God has wrought for us, and a yielding to His working in us.

Both the blessing of the believer in Christ and the healthy state of the Christian's soul, as seen in the types and figures in the book of Joshua, are preliminaries to the active warfare which now opens up. The passage of the Jordan showed us, in figure, the believer's entrance into the heavenly places; and Gilgal likewise figured his true place of liberty, while the partakings of the feasts of the passover, of the unleavened bread, and the corn of the land, proclaimed true feeding on Christ; and upon these great realities came the vision of the drawn sword and the commands relative to the overthrow of Jericho.

It would appear that Joshua gave his orders to Israel immediately upon receiving them from the Captain of the Lord's host. Faith is equally balanced in its energy and patience, for faith is simply carrying out the mind of God. To the priests the word of command was, "Take up the ark"; to the armed men, "Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD."

Soldiers of Christ, our Lord is in heaven. Let us stir up our souls to faith. The Lord has promised the victory as He promised it to Israel. They believed Him; "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down." Faith grasps God's strength; "all things are possible to him that believeth." Let the soldier of Christ,

at his Lord's bidding, go forth to fight for Him; and let him be as assured of victory as was Israel, before whom the ponderous walls fell down flat.

Soldiers of Christ, stir up the soul to courage! Christian courage tells upon adversaries as nothing else does. Christian courage is the first-born son of faith. Again, let us stir up our souls to hardness. Warriors do not fight upon featherbeds, nor stretched at ease in arm chairs; and the Christian soldier must expect hardship. Moreover he must not entangle himself with the affairs of this life, but please Him who has called him to be a soldier. Life's duties must be honorably performed, but we are forbidden to entangle ourselves with them. There are many "indispensables," as they are called, which are really entanglements, and which a Christian, zealous for Christ, learns to discard. He cannot afford to be occupied during the few hours of active service he is called to on earth, with things which once engrossed his thoughts and time. Like the racer, he lays aside every weight. Weights and entanglements are sore hindrances to Christian service. Anything that keeps the mind busy, to the exclusion of Christ's interests, should be suspected.

In Christian conflict, the armed men ever go on in the front; the gathering host make up the rear. God has always His front-rank men-men able to use the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God-men too who expose themselves to Satan's attacks.

A good soldier loves his profession, and a true Christian soldier loves Christian warfare; it is his joy, his delight, to take pleasure in hardships and weariness. He enjoys what featherbed Christians regard as self-inflicted penance, or as unnecessary trouble. Forward, ever forward, is his cry. It is no burden to him, but rather his happy service, to spend and to be spent for his Lord; it is heavenly rapture to him when sinners are made captive for Christ, when Satan-bound souls are loosed, and pass from death unto life, from the power of Satan to God. Idleness and ease are a distress to the one who is fired by eternal prospects, energized by the Holy Ghost, and constrained by Christ's love. "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" is his reply to the countless efforts to damp his ardor and to quench his zeal. Eternity, eternity, he whispers to himself, when his weary body almost resents carrying out the orders of his soul. Such a spirit marks the front-rank men. May God bring Christ's soldiers to the front; and especially, may the young Christian who reads this page, be fired by the prospects of eternity, and be filled with holy zeal the entire period of his short life below.

Expectation is the offspring of faith; small expectations are born of small faith; but when God is before the soul, expectation of blessing exists, and result follows. We do not say immediate result is always visible; but working for God without expecting Him to bless, is like sowing seed without looking for the harvest, or firing at a fortress without hoping to hit it.

An army without faith in its leaders is sure to be discomfited. Without faith in their Lord, Christ's soldiers strike no good blows. Alas for the pointless, aimless, self-satisfied routine which goes by the name of fighting for God! such parade duty is not warfare. The untutored eye may consider both very much alike; however, when men fall down wounded, and cry for mercy, we know it is not the effect of mere human energy, but the work of God the Holy Ghost.

Joshua gave orders for the day only: "Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD." So all work of faith is day by day work, step by step

progress; and this is the only true and happy way of living for God. In the happy satisfaction that they had obeyed God, Israel's first day ended-a comfort which we trust may be ours each one daily-and as to the rest, let the men of Jericho think as they please.

Early in the morning of the second day Joshua arose, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. A fresh fact is now presented, and one which is of practical moment. The seven priests "went on continually, and blew with the trumpets." No voice was uttered by Israel, and the only sounds the army gave forth were the continual tramp of its many feet and the loud and penetrating blast of its trumpets-the grand herald notes of the kingdom of God. We may fairly assume that such a mode of warfare, such a continual trumpeting, was to the men of Jericho, shut up and secure within their defenses, as consummate folly as is the joy of the gospel to the infidel world. A huge army, betaking itself to marching round a strong city, and ever giving out such joyful sounds, was, to the eye and ear, fanaticism. No casting up of mounds, no construction of battering rams, no scaling ladders, nothing but the trumpets of jubilee! And what their blasts meant, the men of Jericho knew no more than does the world today understand the joy of the acceptable year of the Lord, and of the coming kingdom of Christ.

The notes of our trumpets of jubilee, like those of Israel, are few and simple: Christ is coming! Christ is coming! But they are joy notes, uttered from the heart, by true souls who long for the Lord and His return. Let the world man its great walls of infidelity and superstition, let it boast in its improvements and development; Christ is coming! Let reasoners say, Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were; Christ is coming! Let scoffers cry, Fanaticism! Be the life answer of the Christian, to all the arguments of unbelief, these notes of love and joy: Christ is coming!

The priests-the men whose service on this earth was the worship of Jehovah-blew the trumpets. So the joyful sound comes from worshiping souls. The doctrine of Christ's coming may exist in the mind, but joy in His coming arises solely when the love of Christ is sweet in the heart. Such is true testimony. The testimony of Israel to Jericho, through the priests going on continually, was one long jubilant sound. The force which lies in true Christian courage has already been spoken of; but true Christian joy is almost as great a witness of God's presence. Israel could not help singing their joy song at the Red Sea. They were free, their chains were gone, and their fears were buried with their oppressors in the deep waters of their deliverance. Neither can the soul, brought into the knowledge of perfect salvation in Christ, abstain from joy-yes, exuberant joy. And a healthy thing it is for older Christians to renew their youth in singing to the Lord, who has triumphed gloriously, in company with such as have just been brought by grace to God. As the stiffness and self-occupation of old age melt away in the presence of the simple joys of children, so do dryness and coldness in older Christians disappear in the presence of the joy God gives to the newborn babe in Christ. True, too true, Israel's song at the Red Sea died away into wilderness murmurings; but there was no dying away, no cessation of the joy notes of the jubilee trumpets all the seven days-all the perfect period of Israel's compassing of Jericho.

The joyful sound was not merely a song of their own freedom, but the continuous witness that the powers of evil were about to be overthrown, and that God's kingdom should come. The obedience of the silent host, and the continual sound of the trumpets proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord, offer a very suggestive contemplation for Christian soldiers. Israel struck the blow that overwhelmed Jericho by blowing the trumpets.

The seventh day was marked by especial zeal and sevenfold energy. "And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times." We cannot doubt that this scene looks on to the end, to Israel's future, and the world kingdom of our Lord. It takes us on to the circumstances of the book of Revelation-to the approaching end. But in view thereof we may well stimulate our souls to renewed zeal and fresh patience. Patience is stamped upon the mode of Israel's warfare-that peculiar patience which goes on till God's time of victory arrives. "Persistency" is the word every Christian needs to have inscribed on his banner. There is a sevenfold, a perfect, trial of faith for the soldiers of Christ in the path of obedience; and the nearer the day, the more the need of earnest toil for the Lord. The nearer the end, the more call for diligence.

The power of Satan cannot be overcome save in divinely given strength; and, whatever the zeal and the fervor of God's saints, prayer is their constant need. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" (Eph. 6:18), is what God enjoins upon the soldier of Christ.

The shout of victory will soon be heard! The Lord will give the word, and then the defenses of evil will fall before Him. When men shall say, "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction will come upon them. In the prospect of that day, let every man go up straight before Him; for there is too much of following leaders, and too little of simple obedience to the Lord, among the soldiers of Jesus Christ. Men crowd on one another's steps, and the nobleness of individuality is lacking, few daring to brave the sneer of being peculiar in doing each his own duty in obedience to the word of the Lord.

The Need of Grace

The whip and the scourge may be righteous, but there is no winning the heart of man with these. Nor is it righteousness which reigns among the saints of God, but grace, through righteousness, unto eternal life. Alas! how many sins that might have been washed away (John 13) have been retained; how many brethren alienated for all time who might have been won back to God and to us, because we have hammered at the conscience merely, with the heart ungained; with the heart, shall I say? almost unsought. We have not overcome evil because we have not overcome it with good. We have taken readily the judge's chair and have got back judgment, but the Master's lowly work we have little done. But how little do we understand that mere righteous dealing- absolutely righteous as it may be-will not work the restoration of souls; that judgment-however temperate and however true-will not touch and soften and subdue hearts to receive instruction, that by the very facts of the case are shown not to be in their true place with God.

Man is not all conscience, and conscience reached with the heart still away will do what it did with the first sinner among men-drive him out among the trees of the garden to escape the unwelcome voice.

Newsletter

There are those today in certain countries who are paying the ultimate price for being Christians - their lives. The western world consists of so-called "Christian" nations, and little is known about what it means to suffer for Christ's sake. But as these nations become increasingly godless - morally and spiritually corrupt-the time may come when the true believer will discover the cost of being identified with a rejected Christ.

If this should happen, are you and I prepared to stand for Jesus, whatever the cost? We will not be unless He is everything - altogether lovely - to us.

I wonder if the reason we know so little of the reproach of Christ, even now, is because we speak so seldom of Him to others, because our lives are so conformed to this world?

There was a hero of the faith named Polycarp, who lived during a period of persecution. He was an outstanding man, a leader among Christians.

He was cruelly taken and brought before the proconsul, who commanded, "Swear, and I will release you; reproach Christ!"

Polycarp answered, "Eighty-six years I have served Him, and He never once wronged me. How then shall I blaspheme my King, who has saved me?"

He was taken to the stake and was burned. Without flinching, with eyes turned heavenward as if seeing some wondrous sight, he died in the Lord.

Polycarp had proved the Lord during his many years. When the testing time came, he was prepared, for he knew the reality of a living Savior.

Let us seek grace, my friends, to follow his faith- to prove and use Him and discover. He is as good as His word. We too will joyfully bear the reproach of Christ.

Above all, are we ready for the return of our Lord Jesus? Everything is shaping up fast for the end. Israel, Egypt, the Moslem world, the Western world, Russia and her satellites, are all taking their places according to the prophetic word. Soon our Lord and Savior will call us home to be with Himself, and then things will ripen overnight.

Many things seem to be ready for the end, and so we might wonder why He delays His coming. But God is allowing certain situations to offset others while He holds the reins and restrains all until the exact moment of His coming.

Every moment brings us closer to that in which we will see the One who loves us, who died for us, and who will delight to have us with Himself for eternity. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

Affectionately in the Lord,

No Chance Work

There is no chance time or chance work with God. There is not a sparkling dewdrop which becomes such by chance; He globes it on the same plan as that by which He binds a planet to its center. There is not a solitary drop of dew falling on a May morning that has not its appointed leaflet, or grasslet, or floweret, on which to alight. The winds and the waters have their time for sleep; the sea, with its million hands, its time for storm and death. Every wave has its own commission. "The steps [even each one, day by day] of a good man are ordered by the LORD." Psalm 37:23.

And oh, marvelous arithmetic! "the very hairs of your head are all numbered"-not one falls without His notice. And, think you, can there be a single servant of Christ whose time for rest is not appointed? Could such a one as Paul prematurely die? Ah! no; rivers have their rest, and stars their time to set; and he said, "The time of my departure is at hand."

Nourishment for the New Life

It is well to begin every day with God and His Word. Let your first conscious moments be spent in His holy presence, and your first desires be expressed to Him. Start your daily course from the throne of grace; in the evening, close it there; yet, never leave that sanctuary all day long.

"Childlike, attend what Thou wilt say;

Go forth and do it while 'tis day,

Yet never leave thy sweet retreat."

We are only safe when trusting in Him, and walking in the light of His countenance. Seek, by God's grace, to be kept in the place of simple obedience on Himself.

There is a deep reality in communion with God, through the medium of His Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit. "How sweet," says the psalmist, "are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth."

When our spiritual appetite is good, we are sure to grow. We need spiritual as well as natural food every morning, but we are more in danger of forgetting the former than the latter. Hence the importance of the exhortation, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere [pure, unmixed] milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Show that you heartily desire it, that it is sweet and pleasant to your taste, that you are nourished by it, that you are satisfied with it, and that you return to it with increasing delight.

Oh! that ALL in God's family thus relished their divine food! Oh, to cleave to God's Word for everything past, present, and future. "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever."

May the Lord Himself be richly with you, filling your heart with heavenly food and spiritual gladness, and causing you to sing for joy.

Numbers 33

This chapter gives us a wonderfully minute description of the desert wanderings of the people of God. It is impossible to read it without being deeply moved by the tender love and care of God so signally displayed throughout the whole. To think of His deigning to keep such a record of the journeyings of His poor people, from the moment they marched out of Egypt until they crossed the Jordan—from the land of death and darkness to the land flowing with milk and honey! "He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing." Deut. 2:7. He went before them every step of the way; He traveled over every stage of the wilderness; in all their afflictions He was afflicted. He took care of them like a tender nurse. He suffered not their garments to wax old, or their feet to swell, for these forty years; and here He retraces the entire way by which His hand had led them, carefully noting down each successive stage of that marvelous pilgrimage, and every spot in the desert at which they had halted. What a journey! What a traveling companion!

It is very consolatory to the heart of the poor weary pilgrim to be assured that every stage of his wilderness journey is marked out by the infinite love and unerring wisdom of God. He is leading His people by a right way, home to Himself; and there is not a single circumstance in their lot, or a single ingredient in their cup, which is not carefully ordered by Himself, with direct reference to their present profit and their everlasting felicity. Let it only be our care to walk with Him, day by day, in simple confidence, casting all our care upon Him, and leaving ourselves and all our belongings absolutely in His hands. This is the true source of peace and blessedness all the journey through. And then, when our desert wanderings are over, when the last stage of the wilderness has been trodden, He will take us home to be with Himself forever.

"There with what joy reviewing
Past conflicts, dangers, fears—
Thy hand our foes subduing,
And drying all our tears—
Our hearts with rapture burning,
The path we shall retrace,
Where now our souls are learning
The riches of Thy grace."

Obedience and Dependence Are Necessary: Old Prophets and Evidence Deceive

The business of a servant is to obey, not to reason-to act according to his master's directions, not according to his own will or judgment. If he only does exactly what his master tells him, he is not responsible for the consequences.

The one grand business of a servant is to obey. This is the moral perfection of a servant. Alas! How rare! There has been but one absolutely obedient and perfectly dependent servant in the entire history of this world - the Man Christ Jesus. His meat and His drink were to obey. "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:7, 8.

Our blessed Lord Jesus found in the will of God His only motive for action. There was nothing in Him that needed to be restrained by the authority of God. His will was perfect and His every movement was of necessity- the very necessity of His perfect nature - in the current of the divine will. "Thy law is within My heart"; "I delight to do Thy will"; "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."

Now what could Satan do with such a man as this? Absolutely nothing. He tried to withdraw Him from the path of obedience and the place of dependence, but in vain. "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Surely God would give His Son bread. No doubt; but the perfect Man refused to make bread for Himself. He had no command, no authority, and therefore no motive for action. "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." So throughout the entire temptation. Nothing could withdraw the blessed One from the path of simple obedience. "It is written," was His one unvarying answer. He would not, could not, act without a motive; and His only motive was found in the will of God. "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart."

Such was the obedience of Jesus Christ - an obedience perfect from first to last. And not only was He perfectly obedient, but perfectly dependent. Though God over all, blessed forever, yet, having taken His place as a man in this world, He lived a life of perfect dependence on God. He could say,

"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. 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. 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. For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Isa. 50:3-8. And again, "I was cast upon Thee from the womb."

He was wholly and continually cast upon God from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary; and when He had finished all, He surrendered His Spirit into His Father's hand, and His flesh rested in hope. His obedience and dependence were divinely perfect throughout.

But we must now ask the reader to turn with us for a few moments to two examples of the very opposite of all this -two cases in which, through lack of obedience and dependence, the most disastrous results followed.

Let us in the first place turn to the 13th chapter of 1 Kings. Doubtless the case is familiar to us; but let us look at it in connection with our present theme.

"And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Beth-el: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD." Thus far all was right. He spoke by the Word of God, and the power of God accompanied the testimony, and the spirit of the king was humbled and subdued for the moment.

But more than this. The man of God was enabled to refuse the king's invitation to come home with him and refresh himself and receive a reward. "And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: for so it was charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest."

All this was lovely perfectly delightful to dwell upon. The feet of the man of God stood firm in the bright and blessed path of obedience, and all was victory. The offers of the king were flung aside without a moment's hesitation. Half the royal house could not tempt him off the narrow, holy, happy path of obedience. He rejected every overture, and turned to pursue the straight path opened before him by the word of the Lord. There was no reasoning, no questioning, no hesitation. The word of the Lord settled everything. He had but to obey, regardless of consequences. And so far he did, and all was well.

But mark the sequel. "Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el" - reader, beware of old prophets! And this old prophet followed the man of God, and said unto him, "Come home with me, and eat bread." This was the devil in a new shape. What the word of a king had failed to do, the word of a prophet might accomplish. It was a wile of Satan for which the man of God was evidently unprepared. The garb of a prophet deceived him, and threw him completely off his guard; we can at once perceive his altered tone. When replying to the king, he spoke with vividness, force, and bold decision - "If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee." And then he added with equal force his reason for refusing: "For so it was charged me by the word of the LORD."

But in reply to the prophet there is manifest decline in the way of energy, boldness, and decision. He says, "I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee." And in assigning the reason, instead of the forcible word "charged," we have the feeble word, "It was said to me."

In short, the whole tone is lower. The Word of God was losing its true place and power in his soul. No change had passed over that Word. "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven"; and had that Word been hidden in the heart of the man of God, had it been dwelling richly in his soul, his answer to the prophet would have been as distinct and decided as his answer to the king. "By the word of Thy lips I have kept Me from the paths of the destroyer." The spirit of obedience is the

great moral safeguard against every scheme and every snare of the enemy. The enemy may shift his ground; he may change his tactics; he may vary his agency; but obedience to the plain and simple Word of God preserves the soul from all his wicked schemes and crafty devices. The devil can do nothing with a man who is absolutely ruled by the Word of God, and refuses to move the breadth of a hair without divine authority.

But note how the enemy urged his point with the man of God. "He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel came unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house."

Now what should the man of God have said to this? If the Word of his Lord had been abiding in him, he would at once have said, "If ten thousand prophets and ten thousand angels were to say, Bring him back, I should regard them all as, liars and emissaries of the devil, sent forth to allure me from the holy, happy path of obedience." This would have been a sublime reply. It, would have the same heavenly ring about it as is exhibited in these glowing words of the Apostle: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Gal. 1:8.

But alas! alas! the man of God stepped off the path of obedience; and the very man whom Satan had used to draw him off, became the mouthpiece of Jehovah to announce in his ears the terrible consequence. He lied when Satan used him. He spoke truth when God used him. The erring man of God was slain by a lion because he disobeyed the word of the Lord. Yes, he stemmed off the narrow path of obedience into the wide field of his own will, and there he was slain.

Reader, let us beware of old prophets and angels of light! Let us, in the true spirit of obedience, keep close, very close, to the Word of our God. We shall find the path of obedience both safe and pleasant, holy and happy.

And now for a moment ere we close, let us glance at the 9th chapter of Joshua, which records for our admonition the manner in which even Joshua himself was ensnared through lack of simple dependence upon God. We do not quote the passage or enter into any detail. The reader can turn to the chapter and ponder its contents.

Why was Israel beguiled by the craft of the Gibeonites? Because they leaned to their own understanding and judged by the sight of their eyes instead of waiting upon God for guidance and counsel. He knew all about the Gibeonites. He was not deceived by their tattered rags and moldy bread; and neither would they have been, had they only looked to Him.

But here they failed. They did not wait on God. He would have guided them. He would have told them who these crafty strangers were. He would have made all clear for them, had they simply waited on Him in the sense of their own ignorance and feebleness. But no; they would think for themselves, and judge for themselves, and reason from what they saw, and draw their own conclusions. All these things they would do; and hence the tattered garments of the Gibeonites accomplished what the frowning bulwarks of Jericho had failed to do.

Now we may be quite sure that Israel had no thought of making a league with any of the Canaanites. No, they were in terrible indignation when they discovered that they had done so. But they did it and had to abide by it. It is easier to make a mistake than to rectify it, and so the

Gibeonites remained as a striking memorial of the evil of not waiting on God for counsel and guidance.

May the Holy Spirit teach us from all that has passed before us, the solemn importance of "obedience" and "dependence."

Only and That

Read Psalms 62 and 68

There is a sweet and profitable lesson taught us in the above psalms. The heart is ever prone to divide its confidence between God and the creature. This will never do. We must "wait... only upon God." "He only" must be our "rock," our "salvation," and our "defense." This is Psalm 62.

Then we are frequently tempted to look to an arm of flesh first, and when that fails we look to God. This will never do, either. He must be our first as well as our only resource. "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee." This is the way in which the heart should ever treat the blessed God. This is the lesson of Psalm 63. When we have learned the blessedness of seeking God "only," we shall be sure to seek Him "early."

A Few Thoughts on Parental Responsibility

How often we may learn a most valuable lesson from some trifling incident of daily life! We remember once a dear, loving, charming little boy who was in the constant habit of coming to his father's study whenever he wanted anything. If he wanted his pencil sharpened, or a sheet of paper, or a picture book, his little gentle tap was sure to be heard at the study door.

The father always attended to his little boy. Come when or with what he might, he was always sure of finding a willing ear and a ready hand. The father acted thus not merely from affection - though there was deep, true, and strong affection - but from principle. He felt that his child should ever find in the parent what he could not find in anyone else; nor could he endure the thought of sternly repulsing the precious little boy, and compelling him to have recourse to hirelings or strangers to meet his little wants. He felt it to be his sweet and sacred duty to attend to his child.

And the father was right.

We little know what mischief arises from the habit of leaving children with unconverted people who corrupt their young minds and pollute their imaginations. Many a one has had to groan all his days over the effects of scenes witnessed in childhood through the culpable carelessness and indolence of parents who, instead of seeking to keep their children within the moral shelter of their own presence, left them with others who not only neglected them but took pains to teach them wickedness and folly.

Yes, many a Christian parent has grievously erred and failed in this matter, and that too very often under the plea of going to meetings, or going out in so-called service. The children have been entirely neglected; and the enemy has taken occasion to make impressions upon their tender, plastic minds to instill corrupt principles and to teach them words and ways of wickedness that adhere to them all their days.

This is very serious, and it claims the attention of all Christian parents. We must remember that, as parents, we have a duty to discharge to our children which cannot possibly be neglected with impunity. Whatever else we neglect, we must not neglect them. We do not refer now to their mere wants, but to their minds, their morals, their immortal souls. Attention to their wants is only a part of the moral training; and it is important that parents should ever show themselves attentive to the real wants of their children, so that they may have no occasion to seek for sympathy or succor elsewhere.

No doubt it will form a part of proper moral training to teach the children not to be inconsiderate or self-occupied, but to think of others, and to find delight in serving others in every possible way. All this is most fully admitted, and is strongly insisted upon; but it leaves wholly untouched the duty of parents to bind their precious children to them by a loving and thoughtful attention to all their little wants, and cares, and sorrows.

But to return to our incident. As we have said, our dear little boy was continually in the habit of coming to his father whenever he wanted anything, and the father was careful not to repulse him, however he might be occupied.

Well, it happened one day that the father was engaged in his study when he heard the well-known tap at the door. "Come in," he said, and the child entered. "Well, my little man, what do you want now?" "Nothin', Papa; I only 'ant to be wit'on." And he made his way to a corner of the room and remained quietly alone with his father.

This was a very simple incident indeed, but it taught that father a lesson which he has never forgotten. The lesson is this: do we ever go to our Father when we do not want anything? Do we go to Him simply for the pleasure of being alone with Him? We go to Him with our wants, and we do well. He would have us do so. He invites and exhorts us to go to Him with all our wants, all our cares, and all our sorrows; and He never repulses us - never, no, never. He never reproves us for coming too often - never says, "Go away, I cannot attend to you now." He may at times keep us waiting - at times withhold things which we ask, because He knows they would be bad for us - but He never sends us away from His dear presence. He loves to have us near Him. He delights to hear us telling out all our needs, all our weakness, all our exercises, into His gracious and ever open ear.

All this is so, of a truth; but do we ever go and tell the Lord that we do not want anything but only to be near Him? Do we ever go and lie at His feet in the calm, satisfied condition of one who finds all the deep longings of the soul met in the simple fact of being near Him?

Oh, that it may be so more and more, and then a little of the creature will go a great way with the heart. We shall be very independent of creature streams if we abide near to that ever-gushing Fountain, and not only independent of others, but a channel of blessing ourselves.

Perfectly Acceptable

I can be before God just as I am; take care not to pass that by. It is a wondrous part of the glory of Christ that a person with sin in him can be in the presence of God in perfect favor. Sin could not be there, but it was all borne by Him who was the accepted sacrifice in His own body on the cross, and put away forever. By faith in Him I am brought into the light with nothing to hide-and I do not want to hide anything.

There is sin and mortality about me, but all that I am cannot separate me from Christ. God says, in effect, "He is the accepted sacrifice. and I have nothing to say against you as to all you are in yourself; in Him you are perfectly accepted; the blood cleanses from all sin." But I have need to be in the light to keep up a walk that becomes such a place. If I turn aside, I shall forget that I am purged from my old sins, and God must come in with a rod. You must keep your walk up by having your eye fixed on Christ.

The Address to Philadelphia

In Revelation 3, in the address to Philadelphia, it is, "I have set before thee an opened door" (J.N.D. Trans.). The spirit of the world, and especially in religious arrangement, goes to shut the door against God; hence the need of the opened door, He having right of way to every soul - "My sheep hear My voice." In verse 11 it is not "Behold, I come quickly," but "I come quickly." We have the word "behold" elsewhere, a warning, or to call attention, which Philadelphia (seeing the state they were in) did not need; but they needed much the encouragement of "I come quickly:",

The Philadelphian state and that of the poor widow who cast into the treasury her two last mites is somewhat analogous. This act of devotedness is found at the end of Jewish failure and ruin. There is this one that gives her all. Her gift, though little, draws forth the Lord's approval.

Philadelphia presents a phase of the Church found at the end of its history here. First love left in Ephesus ends in Laodicea spewed out, or disowned as God's witness. The last four churches go on together to the end. Philadelphia and Laodicea are very opposite states. In Philadelphia, Christ is everything to them. In Laodicea, Christ is nothing to them; there is inside a big self-complacent "I," and Christ outside. This shows how things are today.

I want to speak a little of the foundation of the hope of the Church; that is, the Lord's coming. In the writings of Luther and many other Christian writers, we find no mention of it. But in the last century it has been taught, and brought into great prominence. God has been at work to revive the hope which had been lost.

The widow (Luke 21:2) and Philadelphia occupy a somewhat similar position. The widow has at heart God's interests at that time. Her, whole soul is bound up in the temple. She has before her what the temple is in God's unchanging thoughts for Israel's blessing. They made it "a house of merchandise.", She had it before her according to faith's estimate of it - God's being faithful ---and she cast in all her living. This was under His eye. He saw the value of her act, and at such a moment of failure and ruin that shortly after this He says, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." "As some spake of the temple," etc. (v. 5), the Lord said it should all be thrown down. They were looking at the outward thing - the "goodly stones and gifts." Are we trying to keep up the outward thing? The temple, as the widow apprehended it in faith, was to stand. The inner state seen by the Lord in the widow, and the outward and visible thing seen by the disciples, were in great contrast. Philadelphia is something the same as the widow. The widow is seen at the end of Jewish apostasy and ruin - Philadelphia at the end of the Church's ruin.

Have we understood the total ruin the Church has become in man's responsibility? But God is active in grace above all the failure, and directs the hearts of His people to Christ who is all, and who is coming. "Hold that fast which thou hast." The encouragement fore this is, "I come quickly." You will see the value of "that which thou hast" when you notice the state in which Philadelphia was found; that is, devotedness to Christ:-"Thou hast not denied My name." This marks attachment to Christ. "My patience" - it is association with Him in His patience in waiting.

Philadelphia thus did not need the word "behold." "I come quickly" expresses His heart's desire to have His people with Him, and "quickly" is as fresh and true today as ever.

"That which thou hast" - it is having Christ, and devotedness carrying one on against a Christ-rejecting world. What the widow had would be of little value before men, but of great value "in the sight of God and our Father" (1 Thess. 1:3). What she did would not be found put in a newspaper, or made much of in the world, but it drew forth His appreciation.

Let us see today what we have. Every bit of truth you have, have you got it so taught of God? We live in a day of intellectuality. Nothing so tends to destroy spirituality as that. We need to possess truth in spiritual power. May the Lord encourage us today by seeing His unchanging faithfulness.... They had a little strength positive strength, though little. Let us take home the word, "I come quickly," and "Hold fast," etc. The very fact of being told to hold fast shows the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil at work to rob me of it. He says, "Hold fast," showing it can be done. The power is with Him.

Thoughts on Philipians 4

It is a great thing to rejoice always. It is important to consider the Apostle's own history in connection with these epistles. When he was writing this, he was in prison at Rome. He had been cut short in his ministry, and, as he looked on, he had to say, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me," and "All seek their own," etc.; and yet he had something which lifted his heart above it all-not that he was insensible to it, but he knew a superior power. It was as looking at Christ he could rejoice, not in these circumstances.

The Lord's own path was the same, meeting with disappointments and distresses on every hand, and yet He prays that the disciples may have His joy fulfilled in themselves. It is living in a power superior to evil; and if I am not living in that power, I should be depressed and cast down by the stream of evil within and around me, instead of rejoicing always. To do this, it requires that the heart should be with Him who has already overcome and sat down.

The first mark of power is patience. Nothing troubled the peace of the Apostle's soul. He was passing through the valley of Baca, making it a well. It is a more blessed thing to make trials causes for thanksgiving, than our own mercies. "I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth." Psalm 34:1. In all his many trying circumstances, he was finding that the Lord was sufficient. He possessed that eternal happiness which enabled him to say, when before Festus, "I would to God" that you were "altogether such as I am" (Acts 26:29).

Are you so happy in your soul that you can say that? The young Christian rejoices in what he has got - his salvation, joy, peace, and so on. The old Christian rejoices more in Christ. The young Christian says, I have got this, I have got that. Not that this is wrong in a young Christian; in that sense a young Christian cannot be an old one; but if they walk with God, they will soon ripen. So in 1 John 2:12-14, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning"; and while he goes into detail about the young men and babes, he repeats this of the old men.

There is the continual conflict with Amalek, but in the confidence that he has already been overcome. Read John 16:33: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Run the race "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith; who... is set down," etc. Do not let any evil or any circumstances prevent your rejoicing in the Lord always, but for this you must be with Him.

"Let your moderation be known unto all men." Naturally, I like to assert my rights in the world; and if I see injustice done, I like to resent it. Moderation is putting a check upon our own will, for the present content to be put upon this - "The Lord is at hand." When the Lord set His face like a flint to go to Jerusalem, the Samaritans would not receive Him, and the disciples wanted to draw down fire upon them. If you set your face like a flint to go to Jerusalem, you will not be received by those who are halfhearted. "The Lord is at hand."

Do you believe that? The character of my whole life will be governed by this, if I believe it. You may say, I have troubles in my family; the saints are going wrong, etc. Well, "Be careful for

nothing; but in everything," etc. What do you want? Go and ask God about it. Instead of harassing your own mind about it, carry it to Him; and it is not said He will give you just what you ask, because this might not be for your good; but He gives you His peace. You put your cares into His heart, and He will put His peace into yours. Do all the things that trouble you disturb the peace of God? "With thanksgiving," etc. When I put my affairs in persons' hands, and ask them to see to it for me, they undertake it, and I say, Thank you, although as yet they have done nothing in it. In this state of soul the heart is free to enjoy what I see in others. There is such a tendency in us to get living in the things of the world, where we could not have the heart of Christ with us.

Verse 9. You walk in the path you have learned of me, and the God of peace Himself shall be with you. Joy is an up and down thing, but peace is something constant and undisturbed. God is never called the God of joy, but the God of peace.

While Christ was with His disciples during His ministry, He never said to them, "Peace be unto you"; it was rather, "Fear not." But when He arose, He said, "Peace be unto you." Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross in such a way, that if God rises up in every attribute He possesses, He sees nothing to disturb His peace. I am in the light as He is in the light; and if I have conflict with the world, the flesh, and Satan, I have peace with God.

The test of the true condition of a person's soul is seen in his everyday life. "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Paul had learned it; it is not merely saying it. It is a much greater snare to abound than to be abased, but Christ was enough. I get not only peace in the circumstances, but also moral power over them.

"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." That is as much as to say, I know Him well, and I will answer for it that He will supply all your needs according to the riches of His glory. What a reality there is in the life of faith! He may put us through trials, because this is good for us; but He will be with us in them all.

The Place of Power

Josh. 5:9

Gilgal, which signifies "rolling," or "rolling away," is Israel's center of strength all through the conflicts recorded in the book of Joshua. To Gilgal they repaired, whether after victory or defeat; and from here they issued forth to battle.

At their circumcision "the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of this place is called Gilgal [rolling away] unto this day." It might, perhaps, have been expected that God would have declared Israel free from the reproach of Egypt after He had cast their enemies into the depths of the sea, or immediately upon His bringing them over Jordan into Canaan; but no, He required them to be circumcised first.

At Gilgal Jehovah Himself rolled the reproach away, and Israel stood before Him in the blessing wherewith He had blessed them. Pharaoh had said that, if they did get out of Egypt, they would be shut in the wilderness; and verily it had seemed as if they would wander and die there. At Gilgal in Canaan they were before Jehovah His army, His nation on the earth, according to His accomplished purpose, His purchased people seated in His promised land, and marked off by Him for Himself from the nations surrounding them; and He declared them to be His indeed.

Here we see what God has wrought; and with God's work before us, we are established in His grace, which is in itself the prime element of Christian strength. God has accomplished His purpose toward His redeemed in Christ, and has planted them, who were of the land of bondage, in the heavenly places in Christ. He has removed from them, through Christ, every single thing His eye saw contrary to His own mind in them, for His people are dead with Christ; and He has made them in Christ exactly in accordance with His mind, for they are risen with Christ, seated in Christ on high; and this is the camp - the place of, strength for the Christian. In whatever way the world be viewed, or in whatever way the flesh, as the principle of evil, be regarded, in Christ who is risen from the dead, in Christ who has gone up on high, the reproach is rolled off God's redeemed people by God Himself. He Himself pronounces them free, for it was not what Israel said of themselves, but what Jehovah declared respecting them, that rendered Gilgal their center of power.

It was at Gilgal the twelve stones from the bed of the Jordan were pitched for the memorial, which declared not only the divine power which had arrested the river, but which reminded Israel of the depths wherein the ark of the covenant had stood for them. And here it is in spirit that the true practical spirit of circumcision is carried out by God's saints; true mortification of self is found where there is true heart-dwelling in the memory of Jesus' death. As Israel beheld these memorial stones, they would of necessity consider the place where the ark had been for them. And abiding in the memory of Christ's death for us, we, being risen with Christ, are, practically speaking, in the place of power; for we cannot overcome the foe for God unless we ourselves be in subjection to Him.

The believer knows well enough that though he be seated in the heavenly places in Christ, yet unless he mortify his members which are on the earth, he has no practical power for his daily life. The knowledge of our death with Christ and our mortifying of our desires cannot be disassociated in practical life. We are not in the Jordan; we are taken out of it; but the memory of Christ's death for us need be ever in our hearts if we would live truly for Him. A saint may know his position in Christ from the Scriptures, yet be living a very untoward life as a Christian. But such would not be the case if his heart was occupied with Christ's death for him, by which his sins were put away, and in whom he is raised to the new life. The Apostle says, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20); ever was the memory of Jesus' dying love before his soul. As our hearts gaze, as it were, upon the memorial stones, we say to ourselves, He went into death for us; we died with Him; and then, by the power of the Holy Ghost, we are enabled to put to death our pride and our ways which once we loved.

Two great memories mark the camp of Gilgal: the twelve stones taken from the bed of Jordan, the memorial of God's work in bringing them into the promised possession, and of the place where the ark stood firm; and the circumcision, the witness that nationally they were absolutely Jehovah's own people. The teachings of these two figures give precisely the two great elements of blessing, abiding in the faith of which is strength. First, in Christ ascended, the Christian is brought into all the privileges of all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places; second, by identification with Christ in His death, the Christian is, as a fallen child of Adam, dead and buried and out of sight before God.

From the stronghold of divine grace the Christian soldier needs to be continually going forth, and hither he needs to be continually returning; the twelve stones, and the circumcision made without hands, must ever be before his soul; he needs to be again and again strengthened for his warfare by the faith of the truth of his being a member of the body of Christ, and by the faith of the truth that he has been crucified with Christ.

The effective soldier of Christ is girded about with divine realities. he is braced up in heart by God's Word as to what real blessing is, and his energy for warfare lies in being in the Spirit as to the truth. Power of darkness and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places are the foes; and, dwelling in heart in the faith of being blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, we fight the enemy in the field he occupies. To slacken the girdle is to give Satan an advantage. Do we give up a single truth God has given us? or, Do we fail in practically putting our own desires to death? - then, by that surrender, spiritual strength departs and courage fails.

Prayer and Fasting

Matt. 17:21

It is well when these words express the habit and condition of the soul, and not merely acts resorted to upon some sudden and pressing emergency. They characterize respectively a consciously weak and chastened soul; and in such case, whatever may be the strength of the enemy, or the difficulty of the circumstances, there is certain victory; for the battle is not ours but the Lord's.

The tone and habit of the soul are of the greatest moment, practically, and with God. It is recorded of Daniel that when he prayed three times a day, contrary to the king's decree, it was "as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10).

The Promised Possessions

"And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; and they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore. And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.... And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel." Josh. 3:7, 2-5.

The action begins with recounting how Joshua rose early in the morning and, with all Israel, left the camp at Shittim and came to the borders of the Jordan. There is a remarkable group of lessons in the teaching commencing with the third chapter and ending with the sixth. Such divine instruction as these chapters contain demands, as the very first requirement in those that hear them, diligence of soul. Joshua in his energy rose early in the morning; a lively state of soul is needful if we would not miss our lessons in grace and glory. Christians cannot see divine truths so long as they sleep. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. 5:14.

Three distinct lessons shine out in the verses given at the head of this article. First, every eye was to be on the ark; second, the people were to sanctify themselves; third, Joshua, personally, was to be magnified.

The first is of the deepest practical importance. Fixing the eye on Christ, the ark, is the only means whereby God's ways for His people can be understood. By no other plan will the soul be filled with God's thoughts. The officers went through the host with the command, Observe the ark, leave a space between it and you, for Israel is going away never before trodden. Every genuine officer among God's people, every servant duly commissioned by God to lead, has but one voice to those he addresses-Look at Christ, keep the eye on Christ; with reverential steps give Him the pre-eminence; follow where He leads. Where the path may be is not the question; where Christ leads is the consideration. Obedience to His voice relieves from the thousand questions and difficulties which hinder progress in divine things.

Israel had the pillar of fire to lead them out of Egypt; they had the ark to lead them into Canaan. In either case they had but to follow the divine guidance, for they could not make a way for themselves through the waters. Efforts after path-making hinder many from treading that which God has made, but in looking to Christ the path of blessing appears before the feet. The steps of faith are of necessity ever new, and it is simply by looking off to Jesus that we can "know the way by which ye must go."

In the wilderness, if the ark abode beneath its curtains, the people remained in their tents; if it went forward, they followed. And as they were now about to tread a path hitherto untrodden, one of

which they had no knowledge, in an especial manner they needed to observe the leadings of the ark - "that ye might know the way by which ye must go."

Yet while they were to observe the ark and follow it, they were not to come near it; far from pressing upon it, they were to leave a set distance between it and them, a measured space of two thousand cubits. And the Christian must ever give the Lord Jesus Christ His full place, for in all things He must have the pre-eminence (Col. 1:18). There is a divine distance between Him and His people. He is the way, and He has made it. He is the leader, and He leads. We learn God's way as we see Him, and we take it as we follow Him. If looking at one another, we are not looking off unto Jesus. Every eye must be on Him. If the Israelites had not left a space between themselves and the ark, the fore ranks would have prevented those that followed from seeing it. How happily the officers directed the eyes of the people from their own guidance to the guiding ark! What a brilliant example for preachers and teachers of Christ! The Christian must have an uninterrupted view of Christ if he would walk in God's way, a view of Christ Himself and not of officers who, though they can direct where to look for salvation and blessing, can neither save nor bless. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" The great Apostle never obstructed the vision of the weakest saint by placing himself between that saint and Christ.

At the Red Sea, God made the path by the rod of His power; there Israel had the pillar of glory behind them, and the way cleft through the sea before them. At Jordan, the rod gave place to the ark. The ark, in a special way, represents a personal Christ; its shittim wood - His humanity; its gold - His deity; its contents (the law) - His righteousness as a man. All testify to Him personally. The sign for their movement, their only sign, was the guiding ark.

"Ye have not passed this way heretofore" is true, experimentally, of numbers of God's people in relation to their entrance into the heavenly places. Experimentally, we say; for in fact all saints of God are now seated in the heavenly places in Christ. It is not possible to be a true Christian and not to be seated by God in Christ in the heavenly places. Yet, if following God, the believer will often find himself, practically speaking, treading an unknown path - a simple but solemn reality which tests faith.

In the next place, the word to Israel was, "Sanctify yourselves." Reverence and holiness were the necessary conditions to seeing the wonders the Lord was about to work for them. No truth of God can be lightly taken up by the believer save at his spiritual peril; and unless there be this holy fear of the Lord our God, we shall not in spirit truly enter into His work for us. Walking by faith in the way the Lord Jesus has made, apart from reverential footsteps, is impossible. Then how shall we sanctify ourselves? No outward sanctification, or external separation from any form of evil, will avail. True heart work, in the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, is essential. "The flesh profiteth nothing." The Spirit of God is the sanctifier. The more closely the Jewish ceremonial sanctification is regarded, the more evidently is it seen that its figures pointed to true heart and conscience work.

In the third place, Jehovah promised Joshua a place of glory in the sight of all Israel, such as he had never had before, one which was to be as that of Moses when he was the divinely appointed leader of God's people. This is very sweet to the true Christian who loves his blessed Lord and Savior. It is a joyous thing to know that the mighty work of God in raising up the Lord from the

dead, and in giving life in Him risen to all for whom He died, is direct honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. The more genuinely believers receive in the soul what God has done in raising up Christ from the dead, and in setting them in heavenly places, the more their hearts magnify Christ.

Let us exalt Jesus as our Savior from sin and from this Egypt's doom, and also as our leader, step by step, through this wilderness world; let us also magnify Him as He is, the ascended Son of man in glory. He is not fully magnified in the soul until He is known as the Joshua, the risen and ascended Lord. Jehovah promised that Joshua should be magnified before the Jordan was passed, and Israel accepted Joshua as their God-honored leader by the emptied Jordan. Christians know Christ as their Joshua by His having overcome death, and by His entrance into heaven. If the true Christian has one desire more deep than another in the blessing of God's people, it is that they should so know and so enjoy their blessings in Christ risen as to magnify Him.

Redeeming the Time

My Dear Friends,

Upon returning home recently from a brief trip, I learned that in my absence a close acquaintance of many years had suddenly died. I was shocked, and find it difficult yet to believe that he is gone. He was young and appeared healthy, with a zest for living and plans for the future. But, he has passed on, leaving wife, children, home -and plans.

Death, to most, is not a pleasant subject, yet in the normal course of time it is something we must all face; it is a reality that cannot be dismissed.

To the young, the immediate moment obscures the distant future, and death is something that is not contemplated. But, there are those about us that are passing into the invisible world, and you and I are following fast. Let us not be idle spectators, knowing that "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. 9:27).

The passing away of my friend has again impressed upon me the uncertainty and brevity of life. It has caused me to pause and weigh my actions, my desires, in the clear light of eternity.

In this short life span decisions are made for eternity. If it is prudent to provide for the moment, how much more to provide for eternity! Many, we know, hedge themselves about in this life with bonds, stocks, securities, and insurance policies, but take no thought for the world to come. As with my friend, all will be left in a moment of time.

"How well off he was when he died," is often the epitaph of an acquaintance or friend. But none ever die rich but those who know Jesus Christ as Savior. How can it be said that a man died rich, when at the very moment of his death he is robbed of his all?

"Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven," is the admonition of the all-wise Savior.

Time is short, eternity endless, yet in this short span called "time" we must prepare for an endless eternity. Oh! with an eternity before us, what an awful tendency within us to mind the trifling things of time, and forget the interests of eternity! Truly, when we contrast time with eternity, is it not astonishing that eternity does not command first place in our thoughts and plans? What are the elusive dreams and mirages of this life in comparison with a divine understanding of eternal realities on the part of the Christian whose life is hid with Christ in God? Think of it! In company with the Savior, beholding His glory! And in a body like unto His glorious body! "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

But alas! despite what is ours now and ever will be, are we not more anxious to prosper on earth, than to prepare for heaven? Does not the fear of temporal losses at times displace the joy we should have in believing? While God and glory may be a passing meditation in our hearts, have the vanities of the world taken up permanent residence? Does not worldly loss take stronger hold on our soul than spiritual joy? Were our thoughts counted one by one, would not self-interest reap

almost the entire harvest, leaving a scant gleanings of eternal things?

Should not one challenge himself, "Is this the behavior of an aspirant for glory? Is it not true indeed that one thinks least on what he loves least? Oh, what a mournful confession, that I love my blessed Savior least, since He is least in my thoughts!"

But let us turn away from our poor thoughts and gaze upon the loveliness of Jesus. Let us contemplate Him, and surely He will possess our thoughts and settle our affections on things above. Then there will be that longing to be with Him and that happy company around Himself.

Should anything below move him who has his portion above? Should the pleasures of this world, which are but vanity, allure him, or the troubles of the world terrify him who, in a moment, is to depart to be with Christ?

To sum it up, my Christian friend, let it be our constant and impelling motive to walk in view of the world to come, until the happy day when there we shall enter into the joy of our Lord.

Affectionately in the Lord,

The Refiner of Silver

Some months ago a few ladies, who met together in Dublin to read the Scriptures and make them the subject of conversation, were reading the third chapter of Malachi. One of the ladies gave it as her opinion that the "fullers' soap" and the "refiner... of silver" were the same image, both intended to convey the same view of the sanctifying influence of the grace of Christ; while another observed, there is something remarkable in the expression in the third verse, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." They agreed that possibly it might be so, and one of the ladies proposed to call on a silversmith, and report to them what he said on the subject.

She went, accordingly, and, without telling him the object of her errand, begged to know the process of refining silver. This he fully described to her. "But," said she, "do you sit while the work of refining is going on?" "Oh, yes, madam," replied the silversmith; "I must sit with my eye steadily fixed on the furnace, for if the time necessary for refining is exceeded, the silver is sure to be injured." At once she saw the beauty and the comfort of the expression, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

Christ sees it needful to put the children into the furnace, but He is seated at the side of it; His eye is steadily intent on the work of purifying, and wisdom and love are both engaged in the best manner for them. Their trials do not come at random; the very hairs of their heads are all numbered.

As the lady was leaving, the silversmith called her back and said he had further to mention-that he only knew when the work was completed by seeing his own image reflected in the silver. A beautiful figure. When Christ sees His own image in His people, the work of purifying is accomplished. It has been well said, "If you are a child of God, there is no exemption from the household discipline. The voice that speaks may seem rough, but the hand that smites is gentle. The furnace may be seven times heated, but the refiner is seated by. His object is not to consume, but to purify. All, be assured, will yet bear the stamp of love. The saint on earth can say regarding his trials, in faith and in trust, 'I know, O LORD, that Thy judgments are right.' The saint in glory can go a step further, 'I see, O Lord, that they are so.' Believer, on a calm retrospect of your heaviest afflictions, say, were they unneeded? Was this what Augustine calls 'the severe mercy of God's discipline' - was it too severe? Less would not have done. He may have led you to a Zarephath (a place of furnaces), but it is to show you there, 'One like unto the Son of God.' "

When was your God ever so near you, or you to your God, as in the furnace fires? The spices in the temple of old were bruised. The gold of its candlestick was beaten gold! My soul, be still. You have in affliction one means of glorifying God, which even angels have not, in a sorrowless world - patience under the rod - submission to your heavenly Father's will!

"Yes patience! there may come a time

When these dull ears shall hear aright,

Strains that outring earth's drowsy chime,

As heaven outshines the taper's light!"

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 1:7. Selected

Rivers of Living Water: Last Day of the Feast

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:37, 38.

The feast referred to in this lovely scripture was "the feast of tabernacles," called at the opening of the chapter "the Jews' feast." This stamped its character. It could no longer be called, as in Leviticus 23, a feast of Jehovah. The Lord could not own it. It had become an empty formality - a powerless ordinance - a piece of barren routine - something in which man could boast himself while God was entirely shut out.

This is nothing uncommon. There has ever been a strong tendency in the human mind to perpetuate forms when the power is gone. No doubt power may clothe itself in a certain form and, so long as the form is the expression of the power, it is all right and good. But the danger lies in going on with the mere outward form without a single particle of inward power. Thus it was with Israel of old; and thus it is with the professing church now. We all have to watch against this snare of the devil. He will use a positive ordinance of God as a means of deceiving the soul, and shutting out God altogether. But where faith is in lively exercise, the soul has to do with God in the ordinance, whatever it is, and thus the power and freshness are duly maintained.

The reader has no doubt noticed that in the opening chapters of John's Gospel the inspired writer invariably designates the feasts as feasts of the Jews; and not only so, but we find the Lord Jesus displacing one after another of these feasts, and offering Himself as an object for the heart. Thus at the opening of chapter 7 we read,

"After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand." Terrible anomaly! deadly delusion! Seeking to murder the Son of God, and yet keeping the feast of tabernacles! Such is religious man without God. "His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world. For neither did His brethren believe in Him."

Near as His brethren were to Him, according to the flesh, they knew Him not; they believed not on Him. They had not one thought in common with Him. They would fain have Him make a display of Himself before the world. They knew not His object. He had not come from heaven in order to be gazed at and wondered after. All the world will wonder after the beast by-and-by; but the blessed Son of God came to serve and to give. He came to hide Himself, to glorify God, and to serve man.

He refused, therefore, to exhibit Himself at the feast. "Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.

The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for My time is not yet fully come. When He had said these words unto them, He abode still in Galilee. But when His brethren were gone up, then went He also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret."

And for what did He go up? He went up to serve. He went up to glorify His Father, and to be the willing servant of man's necessity.

"Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." Here His moral glory as the self hiding servant shines out. "My doctrine is not Mine." Such was His answer to those who wondered where He got His learning. Alas! They knew Him not. His motives and His objects lay far beyond the reach of carnal and worldly-minded men. They measured Him by their own standard; and hence, all their conclusions were utterly false. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him."

The blessed One did not speak from Himself, as if He were independent of the Father, but as one who lived in absolute and complete dependence, and in unbroken communion, drawing all His springs from the living God, doing nothing, saying nothing, thinking nothing, apart from the Father.

We have the same truth with reference to the Holy Ghost in John 16. "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." The Holy Ghost did not speak from Himself, as independent of the Father and the Son, but as one in full communion with them.

But we must turn for a moment to the words which form the special subject of this paper. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." Here we have set before us a truth of infinite preciousness and immense practical power. The Person of Christ is the divine spring of all freshness and spiritual energy. It is in Him alone the soul can find all it really needs. It is to Him we must betake ourselves for all our personal refreshment and blessing. If at any time we find ourselves dull, heavy, and barren, what are we to do? Make efforts to raise the tone? No, this will never do. What then? Let him "come unto Me, and drink."

Mark the words. It is not, "come unto Me, and draw." We may draw for others and be dry ourselves; but if we drink, our own souls are refreshed, and then - "rivers of living water."

Nothing is more, miserable than the restless efforts of a soul out of communion. We may be very busy; our hands may be full of work; our feet may run hither and thither; the head may be full of knowledge; but if the heart be not livingly occupied with the Person of Christ, it will, it must be, all barrenness and desolation so far as we are personally concerned; and there will, there can, be no "rivers of living water" flowing out for others. Impossible. If we are to be made a blessing to others, we must feed upon Christ for ourselves. We do not "drink" for other people; we drink to satisfy our thirst; and as we drink, the rivers flow. Show us a man whose heart is filled with Christ, and we will

show you a man whose hands are ready for work, and his feet ready to run; but unless we begin with heart communion, our running and our doing will be a miserable failure - there will be no glory to God - no rivers of living water.

Yes, reader, we must begin in the very innermost circle of our own moral being, and there be occupied, by faith, with a living Christ, else all our service will prove utterly worthless. If we want to act on others, if we would be made a blessing in our day and generation, if we desire to bring forth any fruit to God, if we would shine as lights amid the moral gloom around, if we would be a channel of blessing in the midst of a sterile desert, then, verily, we must hearken to our Lord's words in John 7:37 - we must drink at the fountainhead. And what then? Drink still - drink ever - drink largely - and then the rivers must flow. If I say, I must try and be a channel of blessing to others, I shall only prove my own folly and weakness. But if I bring my empty vessel to the Fountainhead and get it filled, then, without the smallest effort, the rivers will flow.

Sanctification: What Is It?

Sanctification signifies literally a setting apart to God like a vessel for the use of God in the temple. (See 2 Tim. 2:21.)

The ground of it is the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:29). The measure of it is the Person of Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). The power of it is the Holy Ghost (1 Pet. 1:1, 2).

The application of it is by the Word of God (John 17:17-19).

Sanctification is both positional and practical.

As to position, all believers are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once (Heb. 10:10).

To all believers, Christ is made unto them sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30).

All believers have sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:2). All believers are sanctified through the truth (John 17:19). All believers are sanctified through faith (Acts 26:18).

As to practice, the Apostle desires that the God of peace may sanctify believers wholly (holoteleis); that is, entirely to the end (1 Thess. 5:23).

The will of God was their sanctification, which is divided into four parts:

Abstaining from fornication and uncleanness.

Positive practical holiness, which is the same word as sanctification in the original language.

Love to one another.

Orderly walk, and working with their own hands (1 Thess. 4:3-12).

The Lord also prays for the believers as to practical sanctification. "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." John 17:17.

The epistle to the Hebrews is the great epistle on sanctification.

The object of the Apostle in writing the epistle was to separate or sanctify the Hebrew Christians from everything to Christ. They were still clinging to Judaism, the Jewish religion, which had just crucified the Lord.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3:1, 2 show them to be sanctified brethren in association with the Son of God.

Chapters 7, 9, and 10 show them to be sanctified worshipers in association with Christ the glorified High Priest, the center of worship.

In chapter 12 they are disciplined to become partakers of the Father's holiness because they were settling down in the world, and clinging to the earthly religion.

Exhortation-chapter 13:13.

Let us go to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

If a man purge himself from these (that is, vessels of dishonor), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use (2 Tim. 2:21).

My reader, the first Adam and his descendants have set themselves apart to evil and the rejection of Christ. Christ, the last Adam, set Himself apart from all evil to God, and by His death and resurrection is now fully separated to God. Do you belong to Adam, or to Christ?

Satan and His Ways

SATAN AND HIS WAYS

Satan is a fallen creature, and cannot possess either omniscience or, omnipresence -John 8:44 is a distinct testimony. But Satan has a whole multitude of demons under his authority-so much so, that in the poor Gadarene there was a legion. He is the prince of demons.

With respect to the knowledge of thoughts, he does not know them intuitively, as God does; but he, as a spirit full of intelligence and subtlety, discerns with the greatest clearness the motives of the heart, and has gained experience by the practice of many thousand years; but I believe that he understands nothing of the power of love. He was able in his malice to raise up the Chaldeans, through desire of plunder, against Job; but, not knowing the purpose of God to bless him by this means, he did nothing but fulfill it. He did all that he could to get Christ put to death, but he only fulfilled the wonderful purpose of God for our salvation.

However, when he has to do with the evil heart of man, the case is different. He can present objects to awaken lusts. If we (Christians) reckon ourselves to be dead, dead to sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, he is not able to tempt us. At least the temptation remains without effect; but if the flesh is not held as dead, then he can present objects which the flesh likes, and suggests to a man the means of satisfying his lusts. Thus he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus for a little money.

But man is responsible, because without lust Satan could do nothing; he has nothing to offer to the new man, or if he offers anything, it only produces horror in the soul; the soul suffers as Christ suffered at the sight of evil in this world, or else it overcomes as Christ overcame in the wilderness. But, when the soul is not set free, he can indeed insinuate wicked thoughts, and unbelieving thoughts, and words of blasphemy, in such a way that these words and thoughts seem to proceed from the man himself. Nevertheless, if the man is truly converted, we always find that he has a sense of horror at the things that arise in his mind, and we see that they are not really his own thoughts. If he is not converted, he does not distinguish between the demon and himself, as we find in the gospels. But if he is converted it is a proof that he has opened the door to the devil by sin, hidden sin it may be, or by negligence.

Further, Satan is the prince of this world, and its god; and he governs the world by means of the passions and lusts of men; and he is able to raise up the whole world against Christians, as he did against Christ, and so try their faith. He can seek to mingle truth and error, and thus deceive Christians if they are not spiritual; and also, as the demon at Philippi did (Acts 16:16-18), he can get Christians mixed up with the world in order to destroy the testimony of God; he can change himself into "an angel of light," but the spiritual man discerns all things (1 'Cor. 2:15).

Satan has but little power over us if we walk humbly, close to the Lord, following faithfully the Word of God, having Christ as the only Object of the heart. Satan knows well that he has been conquered; therefore it is said, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James, 4:7. His

influence in the world is very, great through the motives of the human heart, and he acts on men through each other. Likewise, from the rapidity of his operations and actions, he appears to be everywhere; and then he employs a great multitude of servants who are all wicked; but in fact he is not present everywhere.

But God is really present, and if we are under the influence of the Spirit of God, and the conscience in the presence of God, Satan has no power. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." 1 John 5:18. However things may be with us, if we are truly the children of God, he will fulfill the counsels of God in respect to us; it may be by chastisement, if need be. But God knows all things. He, in the most absolute sense, penetrates everywhere. He orders all things-Satan's efforts even - for our good; and if we are armed with the whole armor of God, the darts of the evil one do not reach the soul.

History of Simon Peter

John 21:1-14

We have in this passage some instruction with regard to the service and food of the Lord's servants, which we will examine in detail.

After Peter's many experiences, it would seem as if he were henceforth qualified for service. He went forth, followed by six other disciples, to fish in the Sea of Tiberias. What characterized this undertaking was that Peter took the initiative himself of setting to work to obtain the results of his labor. It was in vain, and the night waned before he and his companions had seen their efforts crowned with any success. Peter employed the same means as on a corresponding occasion, previous to his conversion. How often when God entrusts us with active service, we set about it like men in the flesh, and our work is barren. It is important to understand that in ministry all, absolutely all, must be of God, and nothing of man.

The scene changed as soon as Jesus stood on the shore; His presence ushered in the dawn of a day of blessing.

His presence was what was most needed. As long as they had toiled without Him, their efforts were fruitless. It was daybreak when this scene took place. There is a special moment determined of God for service; and the disciples, unmindful of it, had lost their time during the whole night. They found the fish at the right side of the ship, in a special place only known to Jesus. And Peter had to trust to this knowledge before his activity could be crowned with success. The disciples cast their nets at His word, having nothing else to depend on; and they captured one hundred and fifty-three great fishes; their fishing in this place closed with a number determined and known only by the Lord. From, this moment they had something else to do; they brought the result of their labor to Jesus (v. 10). They did not fish for themselves or others, but for the Lord alone.

O that our hearts, dear servants of Christ, might all learn this lesson! When, where, with whom, by whom, and for whom, are we working? Does our life consist of one long night of human activity directed by the will of man? or is it like an aurora illuminated by the Lord's presence? and do we see our nets filled because we work in dependence on Him?

As to the food, Jesus stood on the shore and said, "Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No." Doubtless they thought that this stranger, whom they had not yet recognized, was in need of food. But the question forced them to, avow that until now all their labor had given nothing to Christ. Then came the words. "Cast the net." It was as if He said to them, If you would give Me something, ye must receive it from Me. From that moment John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, could no longer be mistaken; for to him the Lord was One who gave, and to whom nothing was given.

Here another point comes out; the disciples themselves had nothing to eat. Labor does not nourish; it causes hunger. Even fruitful labor, a miraculous catch of fish, left the disciples a prey to

hunger. How many souls there are in the present day of activity who remain barren, in spite of their work, because they delude themselves as to the profit accruing to their spiritual life from their activity! It was not on the sea amid all the surrounding effort and agitation, but on the shore where all was still, that the disciples heard the Lord saying to them, "Come and dine." The meal was not prepared with fish taken from their net, but provided by the Lord Himself, who distributed to them. They fed on the result of Christ's work - what He alone had done for them.

May it be so with us, beloved. When we have brought the result of our service to the Lord that He may do as He thinks best with it, let us sit down, invited by Him to feed on Him in the retirement of the shore. Let us return not only for others, but above all for ourselves, to the holy Word which reveals Christ. Having eaten, Peter was led on a step farther in his service, and enabled to feed the lambs and sheep of the Lord.

The Soul Restored, John 21:15-19

"Lovest thou Me more than these?" Peter had said that he loved Him more, and yet had denied Him. The Lord takes him, so to speak, by the hand, and leads him back to the spot whence his fall originated-confidence in his own strength and in his love for Christ. Three times during the Savior's last interviews with His disciples before He suffered, Peter clearly manifests his state of soul. "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended" (Matt. 26:33). "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death." Luke 22:33. "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." John 13:37. The Lord takes up these three words, beginning with the first, "Though all men shall be offended." "Lovest thou Me more than these?" All, alas! had forsaken Him, but Peter only had denied Him, and can therefore no longer rely on his love compared to that of others. Thus humbled, he appeals not to his feelings, but to the Savior's knowledge. He knew. "Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee." He does not add "more than these"; for he compares himself with Christ, and in humility he esteems others better than himself.

Then Jesus said to him, "Feed My lambs" (J.N.D. Trans.). Pastoral care for young souls springs from humility, together with love for the Lord. Where the Lord finds these things in His people, He can trust them with His service. Other gifts are not perhaps so absolutely connected with the inner state; but one cannot really take up the needs of tender souls without self-abnegation and much love, not only for them, but for Christ.

"Feed My lambs." This one word shows us what they are for Jesus, and the value of what the Lord entrusts to Peter. They are His property. The heart of Christ had not changed in regard to Simon, and He entrusted him with what He loved as soon as his first step was taken in the painful pathway leading to restoration. Peter's heart was broken, but sustained by Christ in the breaking. Jesus did not probe it three times to give him an answer only at the third; He gave it already at the first. What delicate affection and care in the discipline! If the three questions had been put without the encouragement of a promise with each, Peter's heart, distressed by his failure, would have been overwhelmed with sorrow; but the promise sustained him each time under the stroke intended to break him down. It was like the burning bush which grace prevented from being consumed. Jesus probed Peter three times; he had denied Jesus three times. The last time nothing remained but what the Lord had produced and could approve. Sorrow was there too, no doubt, but joined to the certainty that the love which was the fruit of His love, though buried to the eyes of all by

manifestations of the flesh, the all-seeing eye of Christ was alone able to discern.

"Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." After the second and third questions, the care of the sheep and the feeding of the whole flock were confided to Peter. It was when, through grace, he had seen himself, and been obliged to appeal to the Lord to discover what he gave up discovering in himself-it was then that he found himself possessed of full and unreserved blessing.

The Lord Places Burdens on Us

"Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." 1 Peter 4:19.

In Ethiopia there are very few bridges. Often it is necessary to wade through swollen streams to reach a destination. In this there is constant danger of being swept off one's feet into deeper water among treacherous rocks. As the weight of the human body is only slightly heavier than water, it is difficult to maintain a foothold. There is no problem, however, for the Ethiopian. He slings a sack of stones over his shoulder for ballast. On reaching safety he empties the sack. So sometimes in order to keep us from falling the Lord places burdens on us. No burden is heavier than we can bear, and He knows exactly what is necessary for our good. C. J. Feaver

"The burden He gives may seem heavy,

But it ne'er outweighs His grace;

It may keep my feet from stumbling

Until I see His face."

Things to Think About

Communion with God should be dearer to our hearts than all beside; and just in proportion as we prize that communion, shall we watch and pray against anything that would rob us of it.

Some professing Christians are all for love, so called, and some for righteousness. Neither can exist, in a divine way, without the other.

We need not be discouraged, so long as we see such a motto inscribed on the door of our Father's treasury, "He giveth -more grace." It has no limit. It is bottomless and boundless.

A Timely Warning

2 John 1:9, 10

It has been well said that a banker is not required to know all the counterfeit money that has been made; rather, he should be thoroughly acquainted with all the distinctive features of the genuine; then he will instantly detect any counterfeit that passes through his hands.

In like manner, Christians should be so thoroughly acquainted with the pure Word of God that when any false doctrine is brought to them they will instinctively discern its insidious character and whence it comes. Are not "his master's feet behind" (2 Kings 6:32) every lie as to the Word of God? As early as the third chapter of the Bible we read of Satan calling in question the express word of God.

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which even the Word of God warns against these "antichrists." In 1 John 2 the babes among the Christians (that is, those newly saved) are warned of these false teachers. They are told that those who deny that Jesus is the Christ are liars. (This was what the Jews who rejected the Lord Jesus said.) The babes are further warned against those who deny the Father and the Son. (This is the anti-Christian doctrine that started with Gnosticism and then broke like an avalanche over the professing church in the diabolical teaching of Arius.)

From the days of Arius until now, his wretched doctrine has had many followers and zealots. They are not now called Arians, but are known by such names as "Unitarians," "Christadelphians," "Jehovah's Witnesses," and others.

Unitarianism is anti-Christian, for it is a flat denial of the Trinity, and no one can accept it and not land in the lake of fire. It utterly rejects the Lord Jesus Christ-His deity, His spotless humanity, His atoning sacrifice, and consequently every need for repentance in, and salvation for, man.

Furthermore, it is sad to say that of recent years these heterodox teachers have found a home in many so-called churches that at one time were sound on these basic facts, by amalgamation of Unitarians and others.

But by far the most noticeable and most active Arians today are the so-called "Jehovah's Witnesses." There is scarcely a town where they are not at work deceiving men, women, and children. They seem to have the zeal of some Jews to whom the Lord said, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." Matt. 23:15.

This cult has been known as "Millennial Dawn," "Watchtower Bible and Tract Society," "International Bible Students Association," etc.

The difficulty for a young believer in meeting these agents is that they are not frank and open as was Arius in the fourth century A.D. One of their self-styled "witnesses" told us flatly that they did not deny the deity of Christ and, when challenged, affirmed it all the more; but when pressed

further, he turned and gave out a most vicious attack on the blessed Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These people will go to great lengths to get their poisonous literature into the homes of the unsuspecting. O Christian, beware of these agents of the pit, and turn from their fair speeches and literature as from the most poisonous venom. There is positively no Savior for the lost in this modern Arian cult; and, consequently, to allay fears and better to blind men, they deny eternal punishment. Yes, "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived," and they have.

We need also to remember that the '2nd epistle of John, written to a woman-a sister in Christ-instructed her not to receive into her house such as brought these false doctrines, nor to bid them God-speed-not even to say "good-by" which is a contraction of "God be with ye." It is no time for being charitable when the glory of Christ is involved. We cannot be neutral in such a case, for neutrality 'would be treason against Christ.

At one time we called on an elderly man who was just a babe' in the truth. After we had been speaking together of the Lord and His things, this man brought out a book which he said someone had given him. His comment was that it contained some good things. It was one of the early books of these Jehovah's Witnesses and was written by the self-styled "Pastor Russell."

We told our friend that if we had brought him a box of candy, he might have said there were some good things in that box, but that if we had hidden some deadly poison in some pieces of that candy, it would cause his death. We then explained that this book he had been reading contained enough poison to damn the soul for all eternity. After saying this, we opened the book at random and found one of the hidden pieces of poison; it was a flat denial of the deity of Christ, and made Him only a creature. This man was then told that if that statement were true, we had no Savior, and advised to burn the book at once.

We who are saved should rejoice in Christ Jesus our Lord -He who, though He was God, humbled. Himself and came all the way down to where we were, and then went to Calvary's cross and died there, the Just for us, the unjust. He was fully God and perfect man. What a Savior we have! And nothing short of all this would have met us in our, deep need. Job in his day, before the coming of the Son of God into this world in the form of man, said, "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." Job 9:33. Job felt the need of such a mediator, and who but one who is God could lay his hand upon God? Yet. of necessity He must also be man in order to reach down to us. Well may we sing with the poet:

"How wondrous the glories that meet

In Jesus, and from His face shine!

His love is eternal and sweet,

'Tis human, 'tis also divine.

"His glory-not only God's Son-

In manhood He had His full part-

And the union of both joined in one
Form the fountain of love in His heart.
"The merits and worth of His blood
Have freed us from hell and from fear,
That we, as the blest sons of God,
May make His good pleasure our care.
"Oh, then may this union and love
Make us walk in the service of Heaven,
'Mid obedience and suffering to prove
That we to the Lamb have been given."

True Greatness

Learn to grapple with souls. Aim at the conscience. Exalt Christ. Use a sharp knife with yourself. Say little, serve all, pass on.

This is true greatness, to serve unnoticed and work unseen.

Oh, the joy of having nothing and being nothing, seeing but a living Christ in glory, and being careful for nothing but His interests down here.

True Happiness: to Be Found Only in Christ

A book entitled, "The Mirage of Life," tells a very familiar story; namely, that "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away." 1 Pet. 1:24. Men have striven all down through the centuries to find happiness in this world. They have sought it in various ways. Many have reached the pinnacle of glory among men, only to find it vanish and leave them disillusioned and broken.. They would be able to look back and say that the words of Ecclesiastes were true: "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." Eccles. 2:11.

It is not only ancient history that tells such a story; the records in our days prove the same fact. Think of many of the great leaders of the nations only ten years ago who have gone down ingloriously. Where is the glory of Mussolini, of Hitler and his generals, of Tojo and his helpers. And one of the great French heroes, Marshal Henri Philippe Petain, is coming to the end of his life in prison. Once honored by his nation, the aged marshal must die in disgrace.

We are reminded of the lines found among the papers of an educator; speaking of fame he said:

"Her wreath mocks my brow-will it hang o'er my tomb?

Too much I have labored, too willingly gave

My thoughts to the world-and have earned but a grave."

We know that even if a man gained the whole world and died without having first lost it, he would still be a great loser if he died unsaved. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" But very many prove the fleeting character of all in this world before they are called upon to die. And behind many a smile is a broken, disappointed heart.

The tragic death of James V. Forrestal is another reminder of the vanity of all here. He had risen in this world from a humble start to become a millionaire. Nor did wealth alone mark his accomplishments; he went into government in 1940 and rose to become a great national, and even international, figure. He became the Secretary of the Navy during the great war, and later, in recognition of his ability, he was made the first Secretary of National Defense, thus heading a potential war machine stretched around the world which would make the military might of the Caesars look very small indeed. And yet he took his own life after leaving the lines from an ancient Greek poet on his bed. We might quote some words from this poem to show the darkness that had come over him:

"Worn by waste of time-

Comfortless, nameless, hopeless...

When reason's day

Sits rayless-joyless-quenched in cold decay,

Better to die...."

What gloom! what despondency and hopelessness! are here expressed.

But let us turn from the disappointing scenes where man's glory fades and joy vanishes, to the happy portion of the believer. Did the Lord Jesus ever forget His servants? Did He ever fail to stand by those who were faithful to Him? Never, never. A Pilate might serve Caesar well and sell the Lord of glory to curry his favor, only to lose it and be banished a few years later; but the Lord will never treat His servants thus.

When the Apostle Paul got into trouble in Jerusalem, the Lord stood by him in prison and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul." He was not left alone. And when he came to the end of his earthly course he wrote: "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." 2 Tim. 4:6-8. There was no dejection with Paul-no "comfortless, nameless, hopeless, rayless, joyless," with him. No, he knew whom he had believed, and knew too that his faithful Lord would reward him in a coming day.

Nor was Peter despondent or discouraged after a life of service to his Lord. He came to the end of his pilgrimage and wrote with calmness and assurance, saying that our Lord Jesus Christ had shown him how he was to leave this scene (2 Pet. 1:14). He was to glorify God in his death (John 21:19).

And when the beloved Stephen-"a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost"-was about to be stoned by an angry mob who refused his testimony for Christ, he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." What a sight he was privileged to see! He was sustained by seeing his Lord in glory, as it were, waiting to receive him (Acts 7).

The Lord sent a special word of comfort and encouragement to the saints at Smyrna who were suffering great trials: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. 2:10.

We are fully persuaded that the only truly happy path through this changing scene is one of truehearted devotedness to the Lord. Such a path is richly blessed in the present, and has the sure reward of glory at the end. The Lord whom the Christian serves "is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love." Strange it is indeed that we should ever seek anything here on which God has written, "vanity and vexation of spirit," but rather we should seek "those things which are above," and have our minds set on them. Then instead of disappointment we have the happiness of His approval now, and shall have His "well done" in the future.

True Love

Our blessing all depends on the... sufferings of Christ. No thoughts of God's love are to be allowed which would interfere with the demands of His righteousness. The love is without measure. That is true. But it is not a mere emotion. It is that which, at an unutterable cost, provided redemption for the guilty. And if we think of love without believing the provision that it made for the claims and exactions of righteousness, we are dealing with a mere sentiment of our own mind, and not with the revelation of God. And poor are the best conceptions of man's religion - something different indeed from the moral grandeur and perfections of the gospel of Christ, where God is just while He justifies the sinner, where we learn that He has brought back His banished ones, and received His prodigals, all the while upholding the full glories of His throne of righteousness, and providing in and from Himself an answer to all its demands. The cross of Christ is the secret and center of all this.

Two Warnings and an Example

We have here an example in the case of Jesus, and two warnings-in Peter and in Judas.

In Peter we may learn the weakness, and in Judas the dreadful wickedness, of the flesh. We get in Jesus what we should aim after.

In Judas we see the mere professor-in Peter, the saint sifted. All three are before us in a time of searching trial, and the result of trial is seen in each.

We ought to remember that we have received the Holy Spirit, which Peter had not when he denied the Lord; yet, having the Holy Spirit, we may still learn a lesson from Peter's flesh. And is not the entire worthlessness of the flesh among the last things we learn? In Peter we see what the flesh is.

There is no real living upon the hope of the glory, except in measure as the flesh is mortified and brought under subjection.

I would dwell, first, upon Judas' apostasy. He had all the appearance to men of being as the other disciples; he had companied with the Lord, he had been one of those sent forth to preach the gospel and work miracles; but his conscience never was before God. He might have truth in his understanding. Again, Judas could not have walked three years with Jesus, and seen His grace and love, and not have had his affections moved. But then his conscience had never been brought into exercise before God. So it is with many. If we watch the saint receiving truth, we shall often find him slow of apprehension. There is something to be judged before God-something which condemns him, and which involves sacrifice. For instance, we see most clearly that the precious blood cleanses from all sin; but only let us commit sin, and how slowly do we apprehend that blessed truth so as to get the comfort of it! In the latter case the conscience is at work. In like manner the affections of the unconverted may be moved-a great company of women followed Christ at the crucifixion, bewailing and lamenting Him! So we read of "anon with joy" receiving, and "by-and-by" [or anon, for it is the same word], when tribulation arises, turning away.

The natural man wants something to satisfy self before God; until he is done with himself, he will be looking for a certain measure of righteousness before God. He may have been, in connection with this want, instructed in the gospel, and thus the understanding may be clear and the affections moved; but, unless the conscience be bare before God, there is no life.

Here was Judas betraying his Master! After all, what was this? Nothing more, at the bottom, than what was in every heart. Judas loved money-no uncommon lust. And the love of money in a saint nowadays is as bad, or worse, because it is being done more in the light.

There was sin in Judas' nature-which sin showed itself in the shape of the love of money. The next thing was Satan suggesting a way of gratifying this lust, for he loved money more than he loved Jesus. And now we find the result of outward nearness to the Lord while the conscience is unaffected- it was to make Judas reason upon circumstances. He thought, probably, the Lord would deliver Himself as He had done before; for when he found it not so, he threw down the

money and said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." He continues in this nearness to Christ until we read that "after the sop Satan entered into him." In the condition of hypocrisy he gets his heart hardened, and then Satan gets between his conscience and all hope of pardon.

Many a natural man would not betray a friend with a kiss, as Judas soon after did. His nearness served to harden him, and he actually took the sop from the hand of the Lord! Even natural feeling was silenced. So it is when the unconverted man gets into a similar position. He becomes more vile than ever. His heart is hardened. Hypocrisy, and at length despair, ensues. Such is the flesh and its end. And the flesh cannot be bettered by ordinances, even where Christ Himself is. Such is the flesh-I can hardly say, when left to itself, for man is never left to himself, never really independent. He has the will to be so; therefore he is perfectly a sinner; but if disobedient, he is servant to his lust, "disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures," and slave to Satan. A natural man has a conscience and shame. He will not do in the light what he would do in the dark. But the outward form of Christianity, where it has not touched the heart, only makes this difference, that his conscience is seared, and he is only more subtly the slave of Satan.

I turn now to the contrast afforded by what is seen in Peter with what we see in our blessed Lord. In Jesus we see the obedient, the dependent One, expressing His entire dependence by His praying. And there was seen an angel from heaven strengthening Him. He felt the weakness which He had given Himself up to bear; He was "crucified in weakness." "All My bones are out of joint," He says, "My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels." "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here and watch with Me." So in the earlier temptation we hear Him answering the devil out of the Word of God. Jesus might have sent Satan away by divine power, but this would have been no example to us. So in this chapter we see the Lord praying.

If you compare what Peter is doing with what the Lord is doing, you learn the secret of Peter's weakness and the Lord's strength. What was the effect of trial upon the weakness of Peter's flesh? He had said, "I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death"; but the Lord had to say to him, "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" They were sleeping for sorrow. Here was neither prison nor death! "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (not merely that there be no transgression). Peter entered into temptation; Jesus never did at all. Yet the trial was far greater to Jesus. Jew and Gentile were against Him, and behind them the power of Satan. "This," said He, "is your hour, and the power of darkness"; and again, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Where does He take all this? The Lord does not sleep and seek to forget His sorrow. He goes and prays to the Father. His eyes rested not on the circumstances to think of them. He looked to His Father. Not that He did not feel, for He said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." It was weakness here as man, and that is real strength.

Remember, if we are in entire dependence, the temptation does not meet us at all. Jesus does not say, Shall I not go through all these trials? but, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" He does not see Pilate or Judas in it; it was not Satan that had given Him the cup, but His Father. So with us; if in a frame of entire dependence, temptation does not touch us at all! Trial comes, but, like Jesus, we can say of it, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Every trial becomes a blessed occasion for perfecting obedience, if near God; if otherwise, a temptation! Jesus was walking with God. It was not that He did not feel weakness. "Tarry ye here,

and watch with Me" shows the weakness of human nature fully felt. As in Psalm 22:14, referring to the cross, He says, "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels." And yet He shrank not from suffering alone when love to His disciples called for it. "If... ye seek Me, let these go their way." But being in an agony, He prays the more earnestly; it drives Him to His Father, and that before the trial comes. Then what is the next thing? When the trial actually comes, it is already gone through with God! He presents Himself before them saying, "Whom seek ye?" as calmly as if going to work a miracle. Whether before Caiaphas or Pontius Pilate, He makes a good confession, owns Himself Son of God before the Jews, and King before Pilate.

How comes this difference? In the first place, with Peter the flesh is sleeping; he goes to sleep to get rid of the pressure of circumstances. Peter has not gone through the trial with the Father. At the moment when Jesus is going to be led away, the energy of the flesh wakes up, and Peter draws the sword. The flesh has just energy enough to carry us into the danger where it cannot stand-that energy deserts us then. How little real communion is here! When Christ was praying, Peter was sleeping; when Christ was submitting as a lamb led to the slaughter, Peter was fighting; when Christ was confessing in suffering, Peter was denying Him with cursing and swearing. This is just the flesh- sleeping when it ought to be waking-in energy when it ought to be still-and then denying the Lord when the time of trial comes. With Christ it was agony with the Father, but perfect peace when the trial came. Oh, if we knew how to go on in all circumstances in communion with the Father, there would be no temptation that would not be an occasion of glorifying Him!

The great thing was, Peter had not learned what the flesh is; he did not keep in memory the weakness of the flesh, and thus the condition of dependence was hindered. He seems to be sincere in wishing to own the Lord Jesus and not deny Him. There was more energy of natural and very true affection in Peter than in those who forsook the Lord and fled. He really loved the Lord. Peter fails, not from self-will, not from willing to sin, but through the weakness of the flesh. In Christ there was no possible moral weakness, because He always walked in the place of weakness in communion with His Father. Jesus goes-through agony itself-with the Father. Peter fails, though but the shadow of temptation comes to him. All Peter's fall began by want of dependence, and by neglecting prayer. We must be watching "unto prayer"-not merely ready to pray when temptation comes, but walking with God, and so meeting it in the power of previous communion and prayer. Without continual prayer and constant sense of entire weakness in self, the more love to Christ and the more good will to serve Him are in a saint, the more certainly will he, by that very good will, be led into the place in which he will dishonor Christ. The other disciples that fled did not so much dishonor the name of their Master as Peter did.

It was thus Peter had to learn the evil of the flesh. Jesus, on the contrary, ever walked in the confession of dependence -always praying. And what use did the Lord make of His knowledge of Satan's purpose to sift Peter? He prayed for him! The more knowledge, dear brethren, the more prayer! "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." As the result of this intercession, Peter learned the evil of the flesh more deeply than the others, and was able to strengthen his brethren.

We are incapable of ministering truth to our brethren unless we are conscious of weakness in ourselves. Without the prayer of Jesus, where would Peter have been? He was running nearly like Judas. Oh, what a blessed thing to be kept in entire consciousness of weakness, instead of

running on like Peter into a place where we cannot stand. How good to be afraid to take a single step without the Lord's guidance! The flesh is ever playing us false-it is good for nothing. The effect of keeping it in the Lord's presence is to have done with it-to be cast on the Father. There is no wisdom that will stand us in any stead but the wisdom that is from above. The Lord knew what the flesh was, and what Paul needed, when he had been caught up into the third heaven. To be taken up to a fourth? No, but a messenger of Satan to buffet; that is, he needed to be brought down. There is the thorn in the flesh given him; there is to be the consciousness that the flesh is worth nothing.

We may notice that there are three ways of learning the powerlessness and wretchedness of the flesh: 1) prior to peace, often in desperate struggles (for knowledge and conscience are distinct things); 2) when we have peace, before the Lord in prayer and communion, not daring to take a step till He leads us, and then He is glorified in us in grace and obedience, whatever the trial; 3) or in the bitter experience in which Peter learned it when the flesh is not judged in communion with God. This last will be the way so long as we are judging of things instead of judging ourselves. When we are faithfully judging ourselves and walking with God, we shall enter into no temptation. Trial may come, but there will be full preparation to meet it-not that we may be able to say, Now I am prepared for this or that temptation. We are in no certainty from one moment to another as to what trial may be coming; but we shall have the strength of, God with us in it. Therefore our only safe place is watching and prayer- yes, prayer before the assault-prayer that may amount to agony, for so Jesus prayed.

We must expect to have our souls much exercised; often, it may be, when trial is there, casting about as to why this trial is sent. It may be for a fault; it may be for some careless or hard state of soul. It may be, as Paul's, to keep down the flesh; it may be preparatory to some coming conflict. But in these exercises of soul we must keep before the Lord; then when the trial comes for which He has been training us, there will be perfect peace. The Lord will make you bear in spirit with Him, when exercised, the burden which He will make you bear in strength in the battle. Do not shrink from inward exercise; settle it with Him. There is no limit to our strength for obedience when our strength is the Lord's.

"If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." None of our souls can estimate what that cup was for One who had dwelt essentially in the Father's love; but the most spiritual will most acknowledge it. Then holiness itself was made sin-no one gleam of light on the soul of Jesus. At the thought of it, when pressed by Satan on His soul, we see Him sweating as it were great drops of blood. He did not think lightly of sin! The Prince of life was brought into the dust of death-"All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me." At the cross Jesus bore what you will never be called to bear. Beware of denying Him. Many do so in detail who in the main acknowledge Him. Our happy privilege is, not to be occupied with the trial as a trial, but to see in every trial an opportunity to obey God, and to say of each, as Jesus did, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory."

Waiting Pilgrims

We may have the hope of the Lord's coming, being glad to get to the end of this desert, because it is a desert; or we may long to get out, because Canaan is at the end. If it is not the latter, we shall be in danger of being tired with running, which is always wrong. We should be in the spirit of waiting pilgrims, not weary ones. We ought not to be weary; I do not say we are not, but we ought to be ever desiring His coming, because He is precious.

In Rev. 22:17, the bride says, "Come," in answer to what He is, when He says, "I am... the bright and morning star."

God does not reject the cry which comes to Him as "out of the depths"; but there is a difference between the cry of distress, and the cry of desire.

Walking With God

There is such a thing as walking with God. The invisible God is not hidden to the soul. Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible. Enoch walked with God, the God of heaven; his heart was above, and he had the testimony that he pleased God. What else ought men of faith to be doing, save walking with God? Faith says, Ah! there is a Man in heaven, and all the divine glory of God in Him, and connected with Him; I can walk with Him. I do not see Him with my bodily eye, but His eye is upon me; I hear His voice behind me.

Walking Worthy of Christ

How could Christ be in company with such a creature as the woman of Samaria? As a Savior, beautifully, because she knew herself to be a poor worthless creature; and it was the worthless and the lost that He came to save.

As a Christian, I have to know the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, and to walk worthy of Him during the night, as a bird of the day and not of the night. The light of Christ's eye is coming right down upon me; if there is one corner of my heart covered over, I am uncomfortable under it; I could not sit in the Father's house and have His eye meet one corner of my heart not brought out. I do not want one corner of it to be covered by the thinnest veil possible. It is a solemn but blessed thing to the soul to have the eye of God coming right down into it. It is a very blessed thing that the One who has washed you in His own blood, and has undertaken to conduct you to heaven, has an eye that sees down into all the recesses of the heart; and it can detect the least budding of evil. When you have been doing what you thought good, He may have seen evil lurking, and Satan near you; and He has discovered it to you and enabled you to judge it in the light, so that it will not have to be judged hereafter. He will go through all hereafter if we do not do it now. He will talk to His people about their walk, and the effect will be perfect blessed confidence between your soul and the Lord. If I commit any sin now, the discovery of it in the light is attended with conflict and agony; then He will tell me how He met me and probed me, that I might have every thought brought out.

It is a solemn and blessed thought that God expects you to walk as one in His presence. A person's life may be perfectly blameless; yet that person may have to say, Ah! but I want more of the power of Christ's life. He is the Head - it is not the question of a spot or blemish here and there, but I want more of the volume of the life of Christ and of His affections to be displayed in me, so that I may be practically witnessing down here for, Him up there.

Nothing should satisfy us but the power and testimony which tells that Christ our Head is at God's right hand. What a difference between the testimony of one who, like Paul, has Christ in his heart, and counts everything else but dung and dross, who puts his foot wherever Christ left a footprint, to follow hard after Him, and the testimony of a man who is living after this world's course - who is on the foundation, but who is building on it wood, hay, stubble, instead of gold, silver, precious stones. Immense difference between Abraham and Lot, in this life and in the next too, though Lot will be perfectly saved. How beautiful! I shall exclaim, when I see one like Paul manifested in the golden city - one who when down here could say, "To me to live is Christ." Ah, there will be a recompense for works which are the fruit of grace and faith.

Weakness = Strength: 2 Corinthians 12

2 Corinthians 12

The Lord gave Paul at starting what brought his own energy to a close. It was all as if He had said:

"Paul, I am going to use you a great deal down here; but before I can do this, I must first bring you into a condition of crippling, in which you will feel that you cannot do without Me, and which will make it plain to all that it is I who does the work, not you. It is for this end that I send you a thorn in the flesh. Do not ask Me to take it away. I will do what is far better for you, and more glorifying to Me; I will cause My power to rest upon you, and perfect My strength in your weakness."

Not only do we need the Lord to give us eternal life, but we need Him to guide it all the way through. He has never promised that we shall be exempt from trial and circumstances of difficulty. What He intends is, that we should turn to Him in the trial, and learn that our resources are in Him, not in ourselves. All the trials of the wilderness, the rough places of the way, instead of discouraging us, should be welcomed as opportunities of proving the exceeding greatness of the power treasured up for our use in a risen, living Lord to meet us in them, and raise us above them. It is with the Lord of resurrection that we have to do. The daily petty annoyances and vexations we meet with are permitted to spring up like thorns in our path, to exercise our minds, and put us to the test whether we will turn to Him in them and prove the sufficiency of His grace, enduring as seeing Him who is invisible, or just walk by sight as other men.

The Well of Bethlehem: Drink of the Well

2 Samuel 23

"And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, which is by the gate!" Such was the breathing of David's heart- a breathing which met with a speedy and hearty response from three members of that devoted and heroic band which flocked around him in the cave of Adullam. "And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David." There was no command issued. No one in particular was singled out and commissioned to go. There was the simple utterance of the desire, and this it was which afforded the opportunity for genuine affection and true devotedness. Had there been a specific command given to any one, it would merely have afforded an occasion for ready obedience; but the utterance of a desire developed that ardent attachment to the person of David which is so lovely to behold.

And mark the actings of David in this most touching scene: "Nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD. And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it." It was a sacrifice too costly for any save Jehovah Himself, and hence David would not permit the sweet odor of it to be interrupted in its ascent to the throne of God.

How little did those three mighty men imagine that their act of loving devotedness should be recorded on the eternal page of inspiration, there to be read by untold millions. They never thought of this. Their hearts were set on David, and they counted not their lives dear unto them so that they might gratify him or refresh his spirit. Had they acted to get a name or a place for themselves, it would have robbed their act of all its charms, and consigned it to its merited contempt and oblivion. But no; they loved David. This was the spring of their activity, and they proved that he was more precious to their hearts than life itself. They forgot all in the one absorbing object of serving David, and the odor of their sacrifice ascended to the throne of God, while the record of their deed shines on the page of inspiration, and shall continue to shine so long as that page endures.

Oh! how we long for something like this in reference to the true David, in this the day of His rejection. We do greatly covet a more intense and self-sacrificing devotedness as the fruit of the constraining love of Christ. It is not by any means a question of working for rewards, for a crown or for a place, though we fully believe in the doctrine of rewards. No! the very moment we make rewards our object, we are below the mark. We believe that service rendered with the eye upon the reward would be defective. But then we believe also that every jot or tittle of true service will be rewarded in the day of Christ's glory, and that each servant will get his place in the record and his niche in the kingdom according to the measure of his personal devotedness down here. This we hold to be a great practical truth, and we press it as such upon the attention of the Christian reader. We must confess we long to see the standard of devotedness greatly raised among us, and this can only be effected by having our hearts more entirely consecrated to Christ and His

cause. O Lord, revive Thy work!

Choose What Is Excellent in the Path of Faith Which God Selects

The more we have the sense of grace in our souls, the whole work of salvation being of God toward us, the more we shall seek to draw nigh to Him in the deep sense of our need of being kept in an evil day. The time is short for learning practically what Christ's path was. But in a day of outward "toleration" and indifference, it is more than ever a matter of choice, and God gives His blessing with it. "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Ruth chose too; a parting kiss could not satisfy her, as it did Orpah. She clave to Naomi in her sorrow, and a full reward was given to her. Caleb pursued a quiet, suffering path of faithfulness to God, walking by faith, and when the time came he used his privilege of choosing Hebron where the field of Machpelah was. Faith works by love and avoids reasoning. The Apostle prays "that your love may abound yet more and more in full knowledge and all intelligence, that ye may judge of and approve the things that are more excellent." Phil. 1:9, 10; J.N.D. Trans.

In the ordinary matters of this life, as to our circumstances, etc., faith's path is not to choose, but to give oneself quietly over to God's ordering for us. Lot in self-confidence chose for himself, pitched toward Sodom, and then went into it. The first warning God gave him had no effect upon him; he was delivered at that time by his uncle's intervention, but he had no mind to leave Sodom; and when the wicked city was at length destroyed, he lost everything; and the beautiful plains he had coveted became a burning fiery furnace. Abraham, through humiliating experience in Egypt, learned the first lesson of the wilderness-not to have confidence in himself. And so being consciously incompetent to choose, he was glad that God should choose for him, and he was blessed.

In spiritual things the contrary holds good; God expects us to choose what is most excellent in the path which He graciously opens up to us. We have not to seek anything dazzling, or out of the way, not to put forth any remarkable effort that would attract attention or make other people talk about us. We have simply to walk heartily and joyfully in the Lord's path, and have our hearts set on things above, where He sits, and receive what He sets before us. Ruth had not to go out of her way to leave her country and cast in her lot with Naomi. The link had been formed quietly and naturally, and she held to it, minded not to leave or give up that which God had set before her. "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Nothing could be more unpretentious. There was no self-assertion, no brilliant resolution or vow as to the future, only a quiet settled purpose to cleave to what was already hers through grace, at a time when death seemed to have ruined all her prospects.

So with Caleb; he had been sent as one of the spies, had gone in obedience, and traversed the land from south to north, right up to Lebanon; and he clung to the promise, "Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance." He had then a right to pick and choose his inheritance in all the best of the land given to the fathers. And after 45 years of patience he chose that city and suburbs where the sons of Anak lived, and where the spies felt with terror their own insignificance. It is the only city mentioned in Numbers 13 as being in the land, and was the

home of the giants. During seven years conflict Joshua and all Israel had left those giants alone, yet Caleb ventures to say that "If so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said." It was simple faith, persevering to the end in the humility and withal boldness which faith gives - no pretension, no boasting, but the quiet confidence of one who walked with God. And the "fields of the city, and the villages thereof," were made his forever (Josh. 21:12). The first "lot" given to the sons of Aaron was in the city itself. Such is the choice of faith, working by love; and love must have its object, known to the soul and enjoyed. Without such an object, holiness is not possible for us.

Elisha is another stirring example of the simplicity of faith's choice, showing the soul is held as by a chain of gold in the path of God's ordering and blessing. "As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee," was the simple answer to the test - and no ordinary test - applied three times to him; and it ended in the expression of acknowledged communion, followed by the thrilling sight of the man who went up to heaven without dying, and the reception of special blessing as he gathered up the precious mantle which fell to him.

"Draw nigh to God," James says, "and He will draw nigh to you." May it be increasingly our portion, and the more so as the world is carried away by its talk and vain glory, that we may serve Christ in obscurity, and find our joy in that, content with His approval until He come.

What Saith the Scriptures?

The consequences and far reaching effects of error are often but little perceived. What to our minds might be unimportant may have great ramifications and be detrimental to, if not destructive of, either Christian conduct or the truth of Christianity, or both. We see examples of this in the Scriptures.

The Galatian saints may have thought it of small moment to turn to the law for improvement in the flesh, but the Spirit of God through the Apostle Paul deals with their error very severely. The epistle is marked by sharpness as the Apostle reprimands them for trying to be made perfect in the flesh after having begun in the Spirit. He points out that their error was destructive of the very foundations of Christianity, and so he says that he had come to stand in doubt of them. They may have thought that they were only adding to their Christianity, but he shows them that they were really forsaking it.

In 1 Corinthians 15 we read of some who said 'that there was no resurrection. Now many may have judged that this was only one point of doctrine, and that it should not be condemned severely, but that each should be allowed to exercise his own judgment. But, was it really a small matter? How did Paul speak about it? First he shows that it was ruinous to the whole truth of Christianity, for if there were no resurrection then Christ was not raised, and consequently they had no Savior and were yet in their sins-a solemn consideration! Nor did this one error stop there, but evil communications corrupted good manners, and the resultant effect was looseness in their walk. If there were no resurrection, they might as well eat and drink and have a good time while it lasted. Thus we see that what seemed to be only one little error was really heterodoxy that would condemn souls to a lost eternity, and was the forerunner of moral laxity.

We have had a number of contacts with adherents to the old but currently circulated error that the Church of God will remain here on the earth during the tribulation instead of being caught up to be with the Lord prior to that time. It seems that as the very time of the Lord's coming for His own approaches, this mistaken theory is being propagated with energy and zeal. A considerable amount of this teaching is being put into print, and some of it has been sent to us.

This is another case where the error is apt to be minimized as though it were only one small point that should not be contested, but (from the printed matter that we have seen) it is quite evident that the effects are very far-reaching. We would warn any reader against dabbling in this, for once the one point is even tacitly admitted, one is in for all that the system contains - which is an astonishing amount.

In this error as in any other, when one embarks on a course of pushing one wrong interpretation of Scripture, he will invariably run into difficulties with other parts of Scripture; and if he does not heed the signs and turn back, he will then force his way through by making every other part of the Word bend to the one pet theory. In this way what in the beginning may have been only one error, soon becomes a whole set of them, organized as a system. While we cannot go into the whole matter in

these pages, we shall point out some of the other truths affected by this teaching.

This wrong system must have the Church of God on earth during those awful outpourings of judgment found in the book of Revelation, instead of admitting, what should be obvious to any inquirer, that it is not seen on earth from the beginning of the fourth chapter until the end of the book. It is seen in heaven from the time of those symbolic words to John, "Come up hither" (Rev. 4:1). And what is the consequence of forcing the Scripture in this particular? Just this - the Church's true character is lost, for in those chapters we have God again known as "Lord God Almighty," (not as "Father") which is the partial revelation of Himself in Old Testament times, and which will be true again in the tribulation period after the Church is transported to heaven.

Another serious consideration of viewing the Church as present in the tribulation is to find her where cries of vengeance on enemies are heard. This most surely does not comport with Christianity, although it will be in keeping with the time after the Church's rapture. Many of the psalms call for vengeance on enemies, and these very psalms will be the language of a persecuted and faithful remnant in that day, but would be a denial of true Christianity now.

When the Church's position of relationship and its character of grace are so easily lost by insisting on the mistaken idea that it must be here during the tribulation, need we wonder that we are told by these misguided people that the Church is taught to pray "Our Father, which art in heaven,... Thy kingdom come." When was the Church ever taught this prayer? It was given to the disciples before the Lord's death, as suited to them at that time; but it is not a suitable expression of Christianity.

Nor should we, be surprised to find that this system puts the Christian under the law for a rule of life, for it may readily go with it, whereas the Christian is not under the law for any purpose whatsoever. To say so is to lower his standing and reflect on the perfect work of Christ, His present offices, and those of the Spirit of God. It borders on actual Galatian heresy which is so strongly condemned in that epistle. The Christian who walks in the Spirit and has Christ for his object, has a higher standard and a higher walk than merely keeping the law. He walks in the true liberty of grace, without being under any part of the law, although he walks above anything that the law could condemn. We need to remember that "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" (Gal. 3:10).

Another error comes in with this, and that is that Christ fulfilled God's holy law for us in His life. This is flagrant error. Our blessed Lord did not keep the law for anyone, but He did bear the curse of a broken law for those under it. His perfect, spotless life proved the suitableness of the offering, but in itself could only condemn us, for we have not so walked, although there was One who did.

We even find this statement in one of their books, "He Himself bore our sins up to the tree; but on the completion of His sacrifice, all that had to do with sin was ended." This is the most serious error of them all. It is positively a sinful statement. It makes the blessed and holy Lord Jesus have our sins upon Him during His life and prior to the cross, and that is shocking. It involves God looking down with pleasure on Him and saying that He found His delight in Him when sins were upon Him. How anyone who loves the Lord could endorse that statement is a mystery to us. He never had any sins upon Him except during those three awful hours of darkness when He was forsaken of God. We know that some reference Bibles give this same thought as an alternate

reading for 1 Pet. 2:24, but it only proves that alternate readings in the margins are not trustworthy (for in this case it is error), although sometimes they are more correct than the text.

Again, this system will not allow the distinctions between the "kingdom of heaven," the "kingdom of God," and the "Church of God." All are mixed together in hopeless confusion, but their system must be preserved at all cost. These distinct subjects are thus bent to mean the same thing, evidently so they can all head up together at one point of time. Some persons might be impressed by their frequent references to the Greek, but the Greek text will no more support their teaching than does the English New Testament.

Their confusion is further apparent when they come to expounding the parables of the kingdom of heaven; for it is plainly evident that the "kingdom of heaven" embraces empty, lifeless profession, along with true believers. But "No," says the systematized error. So when they come to such parables as the ten virgins, where the Word of God expressly says, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins," of whom five were foolish, and were finally rejected, they insist that inasmuch as the kingdom of heaven and the Church are the same, there are no mere professors in the former. Their only way around the statement of Matt. 25:1 is to say that the five foolish are not in the kingdom of heaven, but God says they are. The whole system is redolent of the working of error, and one parable after another has to be distorted to suit their theory.

Perhaps their worst statement as to the parables is that they have some parts that are only "ornamentations." O the audacity of such a statement! Where is the "man... that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word"? (Isa. 66:2). We shudder to even repeat the statement or think of the dire consequences of thus impugning the words of the Lord of glory who said that His words were "spirit" and "life." We may confess that we do not understand some of the words He spoke, but to think that He ever uttered a word that did not have a real meaning for us, but was only given to ornament a story, borders on things we do not like to mention. Doubtless, those who say such things have never thought of their seriousness, but have sought a way out of difficulties which came from trying to make their predetermined doctrine fit with the parables. If such a way of disposing of any words of Scripture is accepted, it opens the way for anyone to toss out anything not to his liking.

We might mention their confusing the Morning Star (the Christian's hope) with the Sun of righteousness (Israel's hope). No one would think of making the morning star and the sun the same thing in nature, nor insist that they appear simultaneously, but in this system it is one of the results of forcing their point. The same disorder results from mingling the instructions for the Jews at Christ's appearing with the admonitions to the Christians to look for Christ Himself. Apply Matt. 24:1-44 to Christians and you have the Christians in Judea and limited to a Sabbath day's journey; apply it where it belongs to the Jewish people, after the Christians are gone, and all is plain.

Surely the folly to which this system leads should be a warning to each of us to be careful not to bring our own thoughts of the Word of God, nor to press some notion of our own, for it may eventually lead to a system of error.

Nor should we forget that this system does away with what is so plainly marked in the New Testament, the expectation of the momentary return of the Lord. It was the hope of the early Thessalonians (indeed of all early believers) and was meant to be so down through the Church's

history. The result of putting it off and looking for anything else (the Roman Empire, the man of sin, the beast, the great tribulation, etc.) is in principle saying, "My lord delayeth his coming." And in the measure that that hope has been lost, the Church has settled down in this world. O Christian, awake! awake! Our Lord may call us hence at any moment. Let us watch and be sober.

The Wilderness Food

Exodus 16

"I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead." John 6:48, 49.

Places of difficulty prove man's weakness and want, but they are made great blessings when the Lord comes into them to supply all that is wanting, in the riches of His great love.

When the Israelites came into the wilderness, they found themselves without food; thus they learned their own poverty and the world's emptiness; but this was the time at which they saw the abundance of the Lord's riches in a way they never saw before. While they were eating leeks and onions in Egypt, or until they came into the wilderness, they never knew what it was to have the Lord raining bread from heaven, so that "Man did eat angels' food [or, "the bread of the mighty," J.N.D. Trans.] "He sent them meat to the full." Psalm 78:25. So now there is great blessing in learning that the world is a wilderness, that our poor souls are hungry, and that the world cannot feed them; for then we are in the very place to get bread from heaven. "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.... I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." John 6:32-35.

The Israelites had no labor by which they could make manna; man had nothing to do with it; it came as independent of man as the rain or dew from heaven. The Lord said, "I will rain bread from heaven for you." Man has equally little now to do with procuring, by his own labor, food for his soul; it is the free gift of God. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." Man cannot make me receive Christ into my soul; nor can he hinder me. "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2:13.

Man's foolish heart cannot learn any of God's rich blessings by its own wisdom, till the same gracious hand which gives the gift teaches its value too. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2:14. When the Lord gave the manna, they knew not what it was until Moses instructed them from the Lord. "When the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna [or, What is it?]: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat." So it is with the Lord Jesus: "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." John 1:10. "The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that He saith, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.

Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." John 6:41-45. If your soul knows not Christ as the true bread, you know not how much you have to learn; if you have found Him to be indeed the Christ, then you are taught of God. (See Matt. 16:16, 17; 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 John 5:1.) This is a great thing to realize, that we know a truth which flesh and blood could never reveal, and through the knowledge of which our souls are eternally blessed; for we are "Confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1:6. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." 1 Cor. 2:12.

The Israelites did not deserve the manna; they deserved to be starved, for they murmured against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Thus, when the Israelites were provoking God's righteous judgment, instead of raining fire and brimstone, He rained bread from heaven. And what cry has gone up from us to God, that brought down His only begotten Son? Was it a call of love? Oh, no! "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5:8. The gift was the free love of God. We had no part in procuring the Savior, or in His wonderful work. Grace, free grace, is in all the Lord's dealings toward us; "Not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2:9.

Wherever in the wilderness the children of Israel journeyed, the manna was found; it lay round about the host; they could gather and eat in the immediate place of their pilgrimage. And is not this our blessing? Yes; for "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." Rom. 10:6-8. Little could those who lived in Egypt know what a rich place for food the wilderness was to the children of God; the Lord rained no manna upon Egypt. And little do the people of the world, who love the "lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," know what a rich substitute the Lord Jesus Christ is for them all. He who has tasted that the Lord is gracious knows it. But oh! how little does he know compared with what he shall see and have in the fair land of promise, flowing with milk and honey.

The manna was the daily food of the Israelites; the Lord directed them to gather a certain rate every day, and they gathered it every morning. And so now, the Lord Jesus Christ is our daily food; communion with Christ is the daily exercise of the soul that is journeying as a stranger and pilgrim to the incorruptible inheritance. He who neglects this privilege suffers much loss of comfort, and is weak for his dreary journey; for our Lord says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Luke 9:23. If we do not feed on our manna, the burden of the cross will be greater than we can bear; and the narrow way in which the Lamb is followed will be straighter than we can endure. Difficulties are great, but the Lord gives strength to meet them. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Deut. 33:25.

They gathered manna, every man according to his eating - not all the same quantity, but "some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing

over, and he that gathered little had no lack: they gathered every man according to his eating." And so among Christians there are different capacities for receiving the things of Christ; there are fathers, young men, and little children (1 John 2:13); there are those who have need of milk, and not of strong meat; and those who by reason of use have their consciences exercised to discern both good and evil: to them strong meat belongs. (Heb. 5:12-14.) But in Christ is found milk for the weakest, and in Him strong meat for the most advanced; all that is learned about Him is food for the soul. He that knows least sees fullness enough in Him for his soul's only food; he that knows most of Him finds that his soul can feed on all that he has learned.

The Israelites, for the six days of the week, were not permitted to gather manna on one day to eat on another; but they were to gather every day, and to eat every day. Moses said, "Let no man leave of it till the morning." The Lord gave them manna fresh from heaven every day, and therefore, they should thankfully gather, and feed on it: heaven was their storehouse, and the Lord was their dispenser. It was their blessing to have no storehouse of their own, but to receive day by day their daily bread. So it is with the Lord's wilderness family now. He is not wearied in communicating daily strength to His poor weak children; and He charges them not to neglect receiving at His hands what He is so ready to give. Christ is the daily food of every believer; but He is so, not as treasured up in our heads, or in the heads of others, but as made precious in the soul, by the power of the Spirit of God, keeping up the communication between us and heaven. There our treasure is; from thence our strength comes - our comfort - our blessing - day by day.

But alas! proud rebellious children suppose they can take care of themselves, and be the safe keepers of their own blessing; so the Israelites hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of the manna until the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And now, if we suppose that any knowledge or experience of Christ should remove the feeling of daily dependence on the Lord for renewed strength, we shall, to our sorrow, find that knowledge will puff up, and breed pride, and vanity, and odious worms, to gnaw the very vitals of our souls. Christ the Lord from heaven is our daily food, in daily communion through the Spirit; this will have no worm in it, but be meat indeed.

The daily gathering of manna only lasted the six days; when the sabbath day of rest came, then they who had gathered on the day before might feed in peace on what was already provided. So with us; now is the time of labor, not of rest; but there remains a rest (or keeping of a sabbath) to the people of God (Heb. 4:9); and then believers, when all their labor is over, will enjoy Christ in their everlasting rest. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. 7:16, 17.

But Israel is made our solemn warning. Some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, and they found none; even so the foolish virgins, who waited for oil until it was too late, found none; for while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. If you have not found Christ, beware how you quiet your conscience by thinking a convenient season may come. "Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near." Isa. 55:6. "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Heb. 4:7.

Again, the Lord warns us from the lusting of the Israelites. They said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes." Numb. 11:4-6. Could they have a better food than the bread of heaven? and yet they murmured for leeks and onions. They would have manna if they had the garlic of Egypt with it; but God would not let men eat them together. Happy is he who can suffer the loss of all things, and count them but dung, that he may win Christ. They that preferred flesh got it, but got sorrow and death with it; and they that seek the world may get the world, but it will soon be very bitter. Then, dear reader, take heed! The Spirit of God will never show you beauty while in the world, or out of Christ. May we then walk in the Spirit, and we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. There is no security but this The flesh will always hanker after the world, but the Holy Spirit will glorify Christ; for He will take of His and show it unto us.

The Wisdom and Knowledge of God

It was essentially necessary that our blessed Lord should be legally the son of Joseph; virtually the son of Mary; really the Son of God; and all three meet in Matthew 1, in such a way as to evoke from our souls accents of wonder, love, and praise. We can only exclaim as we read such a record, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." If our Lord were not legally the son of Joseph, He could not claim the throne of David. If He were really his son, He could claim nothing at all.

The Workers at Antioch

Very fair and very beautiful is the history of the time of awakening and refreshing that took place at Antioch. The agents in the work were not the apostles, but young converts who had come from the scene of the first outpouring of the Spirit - undaunted by the martyrdom of Stephen. What a glorious vigor is there about the faith of young converts! - they went everywhere preaching the Lord Jesus. The secret of their power over their fellow men was that God had recently given them to know the saving energy of His truth in their own souls. So full a Christ did they get to know, and to speak of, and so wonderfully did the Gentiles receive Christ - a Christ so vivid and so defined - that they, along with the disciples, were called "CHRISTIANS" first at Antioch!

Worthy of the Lord

There are many who own the name of Jesus, the Savior, and preach forgiveness of sins in that blessed name. Some of such also speak of meeting in the name of Jesus. Now, the name of Jesus is unspeakably precious, and "blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin"; but for those who had heard and believed the grace of God, the Apostle thus prayed: "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Col. 1:9, 10.

The Lordship of Jesus is not only equally set aside by the two great streams of human wickedness - infidelity and superstition-two streams fast becoming one, in roaring rapids of violence; but, what is still more distressing, the preachers of forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus, and those who own that name most precious, they also too much set aside the authority of Him as Lord.

We may speak of Him as Lord of heaven and earth, but do we truly own Him as our Lord? Providing sinners be saved, they are left to join and own any government that men may choose to set up in Christendom, never asking or reflecting, Is this suited to the Lord? is this walking worthy of the Lord? Is He not entirely ignored as Lord, and each found doing that which is right in his own eyes?

No doubt, in the crowds that walk along the broad road of profession, there are learned and far-seeing men; but there is a narrow path, and the vulture's eye has not seen it. It can only be discerned by the Spirit. The worst thing is this - men, saved sinners, are content to go on in what their hearts condemn, so different from this earnest prayer of Paul's or even the words of Moses in another day. He says, "Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way."

Have you found grace in His sight? Thank God if you have. But now, if so, have you ever truly prayed to God, "Show me now Thy way"? You may think you know it, or you may trust in men, or churches, and think you have no need to cry to God, "Show me now Thy way." You could not make a greater mistake.

Let us read a few more words of Moses', "That I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight; and consider that this nation is Thy people." Is this the childlike desire of our hearts, having found grace in His sight, that we also may know Him, be more and more acquainted with Himself, and thus ever find His full, free favor? Do we know, and do we thus speak to Him about, His whole redeemed Church? What was the answer of the Lord? "And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Is not this enough? The path may be very narrow, and despised by men; but in that narrow path, whatever may be against us, He says, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." The vulture's eye, far-seeing men, have not known this narrow path

of perfect rest in a world full of opposition and bitter hatred.

Yes, it is enough: "And he said unto Him, If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not that Thou goest with us?" Yes, it is this, the presence of the Lord with the few gathered to Himself that marks the narrow path. But then, must not this separate from whatever disowns the Lordship of Jesus? "So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth."

And was Israel as a nation more separate from the people that were upon the earth, than is the Church of God? But mark, if it is not separation to the Lord Himself, it is only sectarianism, or the disowning of Jesus as Lord. Can we truly say, "Is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated"? We must walk with the Lord, or we cannot walk worthy of the Lord. The world ever rejects and disowns Him. And does He not say of His own that are in the world, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"?

The first thing then the Apostle prays for, for the beloved saints in Christ, is that they "might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Is this our prayer, our desire? For how much more do we need, in these last days of deceivableness, of unrighteousness, to look to Him! Now, have we the knowledge of His (our Lord's) will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding? Or are we merely led by men for party purposes in the Church of God? Do not admit for a moment that this is not your privilege, however dark the night, however great the confusion. The path will be narrow, but the privilege how great! Is there any wisdom like being filled with the knowledge of His will? But do not forget the vulture's eye sees it not; it must be known by spiritual understanding. If, however, a servant knows his Lord's will, and does it not, does his knowledge profit him? No, is he not the more to blame? Thus the prayer continues: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing."

There are lords many, or divers human church governments, owned in Christendom, but each, when compared with the Church in the beginning, displaces Jesus as Lord. In the beginning the world hated and persecuted the Church of God. And what they did to the Church, they did to the Lord. He said, "Why persecutest thou Me?" Now, with great numbers, that very world governs the church. In the beginning the Lord held the stars in His right hand - guided and governed the assembly by the Holy Ghost. Now that assembly is divided into various conflicting governments. All this we must confess and deplore. What need then for earnest prayer, at such a time, that we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing! Yes, will it not be all pleasing to Him in these days of human will, to find a few loyal hearts?

We earnestly ask all our readers to cry to God about this matter. Do all own Jesus as LORD? No doubt this can only be done by the Spirit of God. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3). We may own other lords, but if we truly own Jesus "the Lord," we may rest assured this is by the Spirit of God.

What divine comfort then there is in these words of life, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Yes, if we have found grace in His sight, we may count on His presence with us. It is enough; we need no more; soon we shall see His face in glory, Lord of all. Oh, that we may walk worthy of Him, as Lord, now. May we do that only which is

suitable to Him, until He come.

Ye Are the Epistles of Christ

Ye are the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men; not, ye ought to be, but you are. What is your moral responsibility? To be an unblotted epistle, and you will be that by gazing on Him, and reflecting Him back. If we come together in assembly in this spirit, there will never be any trouble. There would be different measures of attainment; but the Apostle says, If in anything we differ, and if you and I are both true to Christ, and feeding on Him, "God will reveal even this unto you."

The only thing that will enable us to trample self under foot, is to have Christ before us as the one absorbing Object of our hearts. All evils have resulted from self getting a place, and not Christ. The fullness of God ever waits on the empty vessel. The great point is to be the empty vessel. If I am full of myself, I must be turned upside down and emptied of self, and then I can expect to be filled with the oil - filled from His hand. It is one thing to talk of empty vessels, and another thing to be such; but we do not know what we have to go through before we are really empty vessels. We begin full of enthusiasm, but we grow very small in our own estimation.

The English word "tribulation" comes from a Latin word signifying threshing machine. You look smaller when you come out than when you went in; but there is more reality because the chaff is gone. In the opening of Romans 5, we have our standing, "justified by faith," etc. But in the following verses, mark the steps down into the threshing-machine: tribulation, patience, experience, etc. Every real servant has to take out his degree in the threshing machine. You may be in it sixty years; and you look very small when you come out, but it is better to be small and real, than to assume to be somebody when we are nothing. God will have moral reality. There is often a lot of mere sham among us - talking, writing, praying, and singing far beyond our real experience. All this is most dangerous. It hardens the heart, deadens the conscience, and lays us open to the wiles of the enemy.

There may be plenty of intercourse with saints, without a particle of communion. It is Himself we have to cultivate - personal communion with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. If you find half a dozen people together whose hearts are full of Christ, you find a home there, and you have the secret of the source and spring of the glow that was in the church in Philadelphia (Rev. 3); it is Philadelphia condition, and you can count on the Holy Spirit's power. Things done in affection for Christ have a special charm for His heart. The moment you take your eye off Him, and get occupied with works, down you go. "He hath made my mountain to stand strong." We sometimes get occupied with the mountain and forget the power that made it strong. We get occupied with meetings, perhaps, instead of with the One who made them happy, and so lose the happiness. In place of the strong mountain, trouble comes. Keep your eye on Him, and there will be joy and peace, and deep communion with Him, and thus we shall be unblotted epistles of Him.

Ye Shall Find Rest: I Will Give You Rest

In Matthew 11, the perverseness of the generation that had rejected John the Baptist's testimony, and that of the Son of man come in grace and associating Himself in grace with the Jews, opens the door to the testimony of the glory of the Son of God, and to the revelation of the Father by Him in sovereign grace - a grace that could make Him known as efficaciously to a poor Gentile as to a Jew. It was no longer a question of responsibility to receive, but of sovereign grace that imparted to whomsoever it would.

Jesus knew man, the world, the generation which had enjoyed the greatest advantages of all that were in the world. There was no place for the foot to rest on in the miry slough of that which had departed from God. In the midst of a world of evil Jesus remained the sole revealer of the Father, the source of all good. Whom does He call? What does He bestow on those who come? Only source of blessing and revealer of the Father, He calls all those who are weary and heavy laden. Perhaps they did not know the spring of all misery, namely, separation from God, sin. He knew, and He alone could heal them. If it was the sense of sin which burdened them, so much the better. The world no longer satisfied their hearts in any way; they were miserable, and therefore the objects of the heart of Jesus. Moreover, He could give them rest; He does not here explain by what means; He simply announces the fact.

The love of the Father, which in grace, in the Person of the Son, sought out the wretched, would bestow rest (not merely alleviation or sympathy, but rest) on every one that came to Jesus. It was the perfect revelation of the Father's name to the heart of those that needed it; and that by the Son-peace, peace with God. They had but to come to Christ; He undertook and gave rest.

But there is a second element in rest. There is more than peace through the knowledge of the Father in Jesus. And more than that is needed; for, even when the soul is perfectly at peace with God, this world presents many causes of trouble to the heart. In these cases it is a question of submission or of self-will. Christ, in the consciousness of His rejection, in the deep sorrow caused by the unbelief of the cities in which He had wrought so many miracles, had just manifested the most entire submission to His Father, and had found therein perfect rest to His soul. To this He calls all that heard Him, all that felt the need of rest to their own souls. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me"; that is to say, the yoke of entire submission to His Father's will, learning of Him how to meet the troubles of life; for He was "meek and lowly in heart," content to be in the lowest place at the will of His God. In fact, nothing can overthrow one who is there. It is the place of perfect rest to the heart. "And ye shall find rest unto your souls."

The Year of Jubilee

"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.... And if thou sell aught unto thy neighbor, or buyest aught of thy neighbor's hand, ye shall not oppress one another: according to the number of years after the jubilee thou shalt buy of thy neighbor, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee: according to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee." Lev. 25:10, 14-16.

In these verses we learn that in all the dealing and trafficking of an Israelite he was to have respect to the year of jubilee, when the hand of God would restore in righteousness what the hand of man had disordered in His people's portion. The only way to conduct his traffic righteously was to have respect to the year of jubilee, measuring the bargain and the value of things according to that. In principle this holds now. For all our commerce in the affairs of this world should be ordered with our eyes resting on the return of the Lord Jesus, and our hearts acquainting themselves with this, that man's world is soon to end, and all present interests to cease.

In Israel, God watched over the worldly dealings of His people in such a way as to provide for the restoration of everything every fifty years. He then resettled the family estates, and put all in order again. In the Church also He watches the worldly dealings of His saints; but it is not in order to restore earthly arrangements again, but with respect to the maintaining of spiritual communion with Himself. In all their callings He tells His saints now, "Therein [to] abide with God." This is the rule, this is the only limitation now. The soul, amid all around that is discordant and disordered, is to be preserved for heavenly citizenship, and exercised in relation to a heavenly life, where the flesh and man's world will be gone, and gone forever.

A Letter to Young Christians

My Dear Friends,

"Before you leave this course, your faith in Christianity, if you have any, will be destroyed. Christianity is a myth- a crutch for the intellectual misfit."

Isn't this a blasphemous lie? Yet such subversive words are being voiced by teachers and professors in classrooms all around the country. The tragic result is that students who are Christians not well established in the faith often are shaken in their convictions, and make shipwreck; and unconverted young people are turned entirely away from the Lord.

I was recently reminded again of this tragedy in the classrooms as my boy related the remarks of his teacher. The instructor had been teaching evolution as a fact, when my son raised the question, "What if you don't believe in evolution?"

The teacher sadly shook his head and said, "That's your problem." He then went to the blackboard to illustrate how the "evidence" for evolution far outweighs (in his opinion) all other approaches to the "how" of creation. These so-called "facts" were presented to the class as they are everywhere today in the name of science; likewise denials of the Biblical declaration of the beginnings of all things are being made today in the name of science.

But let it be understood by all, that science does not know, and has never known, anything about the origin of the universe; nor does it know anything through actual discoveries about the origin of man. We know that so-called "scientists" talk as though it does, but it is all empty speculation. Many authoritative sources could be quoted to prove this point, but two will suffice:

Dr. L. L. Woodruff, professor of Biology at Yale College, has summarized in one sentence all that modern science can say about origins-"Biologists are at the present time absolutely unable, and probably will be for all time, to obtain empirical evidence of any of the crucial questions relating to the origin of life on the earth."

An outstanding authority on the history of science in today's world, Dr. George Sarton of Harvard, says, "Science can explain everything except the essential mysteries of life."

If science, therefore, is incompetent to unearth anything conclusive about creation, why then are our young people being taught the evolutionary hypothesis as if it were fact? May we not conclude, my friends, that the only other alternative that they have is the wholly unacceptable (to them) witness-the Bible record? Yet it is therein that we have the only authentic account of what happened in the beginning.

Throughout the Old Testament, God is repeatedly declared to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and as such is worshiped. In the New Testament the Gospel of John emphatically reiterates the Genesis testimony of beginnings. The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, opens by charging that man's ignorance of God is inexcusable, because the created universe

above and about him constitutes an irrefutable revelation of the existence of the Creator God (1:20). And not just once, but many times in his fourteen epistles, the Apostle exalts Christ the Son of God as the One by whom the worlds were framed.

Someone asks if the Bible says that God created the universe out of nothing. He did. In Rom. 4:17 and Heb. 11:3 we are told that things which are seen are not made of things which appear. Paul, writing the church at Colosse, says that all things, visible and invisible, "were created by Him and for Him" (1:16). From these and similar passages we conclude that there was no universe before God began to create it-no matter of any kind. He brought the universe into being by His own volition. How? To answer that, one would have to explain Omnipotence, an obvious impossibility.

We can, however, be entirely satisfied with the fact that the worlds came into being through and by "the Word of God."

The psalmist affirmed this when he wrote, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." Psalm 33:6. We would also add the familiar words of the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews.

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (11:3).

Genesis relates that the various parts of the universe emerged by the command of God, as in Gen. 1:3: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." Furthermore, in Psalm 148:5, "Let them {all created things} praise the name of the LORD: for He commanded, and they were created."

When we recognize that everything began in response to God's command, we have honored His testimony as well as gone as far as it is required of man.

Is the matter of creation important? Indeed it is, and since God did create the world, there exists a personal, intelligent, purposeful Being to whom man is responsible. Any rational person knows that He would not trouble Himself to create such a vast universe, then by some mere whim (humanly speaking) populate one of its billions of orbs without any purpose or objective.

On the other hand, denying God neither removes nor changes Him; nor does the denial of heaven, hell, and coming judgment negate the places or event.

As to contending for "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), in withstanding the corruption in the educational system, I can wish you no greater recompense or blessing than that your salvation may be no theory, but a glorious reality to you. May we all be constrained to live unto Him entirely and joyfully. Once we are in the good of this, our hearts will be at rest. Then the false teachings, the vain and deceiving attractions around us also, will be viewed and estimated in the true and glorious light of God's presence, where all else pales save the grand eternal realities that appear just as they are, REALITIES.

"Lord Jesus, make Thyself to me

A living, bright reality;

More present to faith's vision keen

Than any earthly object seen;
More dear, more intimately nigh
Than e'en the dearest earthly tie."
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