

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 25

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A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 25, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

107 Chapters

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Christian Truth Volume 25

Alliance With Enemies

Joshua 9

"What communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14).

A great combination of the people of Canaan followed upon the overthrow of Jericho and Ai, and the establishment of the law of Jehovah in the center of the land. The nations, whether of hills, valleys, or the seaboard, gathered themselves together with one accord, or one mouth, to fight against Joshua and Israel. They recognized the necessity of sinking all differences, and of uniting together to gain their great end-the overthrow of Jehovah's army.

Among these combined peoples were the Hivites, whose cities - Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim - were four. The heads of these cities took counsel together; and, while others of their nation sought the sword, they resorted to stratagem in order to gain their end-"They did work wilily."

The open hostility of the enemy is ever more easy to meet than his devices. When the powers of the world array themselves against a few poor saints of God, the latter have to conquer or die. The early Christians stood up before the great and mighty of their day, and, out of weakness, gained victories, the blessings of which we Christians reap to this hour. Again, at the time of the Reformation, the few frail men, who at the first would obey God rather than man, discomfited kings, emperors and popes. God was for them, and in His might and by His might the victory was won.

But when the enemy comes guised as an angel of light, speaks smooth and flattering words and, as in our day, argues religiously, let Christians beware. Satan has gained more successes by sowing his tares while men sleep, than by all his strength arrayed to crush God's people. When he fails to crush, he tries to corrupt; such are his devices.

The echoing amens of Israel to the commandments of the Lord, and to His word bidding them abstain from all union with their enemies, had hardly died away, when the ambassadors from Gibeon presented themselves in the camp at Gilgal. These ambassadors had a fair appearance to the elders of Israel. They bore outwardly upon them the signs of having come from far, and their credentials looked antique. Persons who apparently come from a distance, have often a captivating power with God's people, and obtain a hearing which, were they better known, would be denied them. The strange fascination that pertains to apparent antiquity for antiquity's sake is patent to all. Things regarded as "old," things that are worn out, "rent, and bound up," command the veneration or superstition of the mind, too frequently without the inquiry, Are these things true? Today many Christians are content to ask of religious curiosities, Are they old? If at ease about their age, they are satisfied. It does not occur to many to ask, Are they genuine in the light of God's Word? or even to inquire what the venerable things were when new! Old and moldy things were new and fresh once, and had the inquiry been raised in the camp of Israel as to the origin of the old things of these ambassadors, and as to what hands had woven the garments, and as to what

country in which the grapes and corn had been grown, the issue would have been very different from what it was.

Let saints beware of "dry and moldy" bread, for stale fare is not of God's providing for His children. Rent wineskins, with the wine run out, are like teaching and preaching which retain but the remembrance of the glad past, joy in the Holy Ghost being gone. Patched-up garments do but indicate that they have served their day, and should be discarded. God's messengers have feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and the longest journey never wears them out. "By their fruits ye shall know them," is the Master's word concerning false teachers and guides. Alas for the infatuation for the "dry and moldy" traditions of days long since passed, and for the blindness of men to the common device of the enemy leading them to set aside the living Word of God for tradition!

The "old sacks,... wine bottles,... old shoes... and old garments" of these "ambassadors" commanded the respect of Israel's princes, and their "dry" bread gave to their mission a solemn sanction. The elders of Israel took of their victuals, used their own eyes, and sought not wisdom from God. These Hivites had deceit and lying for their weapons of warfare, and with them they gained the victory.

The oldest truths of God are ever new to the soul, for they come direct from God. When ambassadors present themselves to us, as did the Hivites to Israel, we may safely assume that their wine was grown in the enemy's land, for God's ambassadors carry with them the living energy and unction of His Holy Spirit.

Satan has little new to offer man, but he is wily in the extreme, and masterful in his way of dressing up his ambassadors, and coloring their credentials. Where he cannot ruin God's people by open war, he will squeeze himself in among them and corrupt the soldiers of Christ. In our own day and in our own land he is terribly successful with his wiles, and ever succeed he will where men, instead of asking counsel of the Lord, or humbly following His Word, betake themselves to the wisdom of their own hearts.

To Gilgal-Israel's camp, the very spot where God had said of Israel that He had rolled off the reproach of Egypt from them, and where they had been nationally separated to Himself, and whence they had issued to war against the powers of the land of promise-to Gilgal, in their daring deception, the Hivites came! And Satan this day, comes as an angel of light on to the very holiest ground that Christians occupy, and by flattery and deception succeeds in effecting an alliance with them in the camp itself. He corrupts the most sacred truths by introducing error into them, and spoils heavenly realities by the leaven of evil doctrine. The place Israel occupied gave them no power-a lesson for Christians! Forms of orthodoxy are of no avail to keep out the enemy. No creed, no principles, will keep out the Hivites. Our only resource is that to which, alas, we so slowly resort, "the mouth of the LORD." True, Christians have no Urim and Thummim as had Israel, but they have the Word of God which lives and abides forever.

"Ambassador" signifies "a hinge," and most truly these men were the hinge to the door to let into Israel's camp the heathen they had entered Canaan to destroy. "Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?" said the men of Israel to these ambassadors. "We are thy servants," they softly replied. "Who are ye, and from whence come ye?" Joshua inquired. Then

they talked of old times, and spoke of work and warfare in years gone by; they were eloquent upon Jehovah's wonders in Egypt forty years previously, and of victories a long distance from their homes on the other side of Jordan, and so disarmed him of suspicion. But not a syllable had these men to say of the work of God at their very doors at Jericho and Ai; this they kept at a careful distance; not a sentence had they to utter of Ebal and its assent to the word of Jehovah; this they excluded.

Satan's ambassadors object to discussing God's victories of today, His work of this hour, the things of all others in which, if His people be walking in the Spirit, they will be most deeply interested. The facts of God's work in bygone days have become, in our own times, history, of which the world is willing to speak; but the effects of God's truth in our own days, its present victories, its demands for present obedience-such home truths are not to be mentioned. Anyone may speak of victories over pagan Rome, or papal Rome, of centuries ago; but the victories of the gospel in the world of our day, and the Word's authority over the children of God at the present moment, must not be mentioned-as Jericho, Ai, and Ebal were carefully ignored by the Hivites.

Satan has consummate art in mingling lies with truth, and these Hivites were skillful men. They had heard the fame of Jehovah, and of the mighty kings Sihon and Og, slain by Israel, this is true; but their credentials, their moldy bread, their rent and empty wine skins, and their old garments, each and all were lies.

Flattery overcomes more saints than does the sword. Where fierce opposition prevails over its tens, unctuous words overcome the thousands. The princes of Israel accepted the testimony of the victuals, used their own wisdom and discernment, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord; and so the Hivites gained the day.

Perhaps because the ambassadors presented themselves to the princes, they gained their way the easier. Many a man of position in the things of God, many a "prince" in Israel, falls through flattery. Flattering words blind the soul to the reality of things. The very position he occupies is solely the gift of God, but if he use the authority entrusted to him as if his own wisdom were his power, he is liable to fall through not asking counsel at the mouth of the Lord. The truly dependent spirit is often more rare in the "prince" than in the rank and file of God's army. Achan, a prince, brought the accursed thing into the camp, and these princes made the alliance with the heathen, and brought Israel into association with their enemies. And the error of the princes of Israel is placed before us in a marked way by the Holy Ghost in the book before us.

"To the law and to the testimony" must ever be the Christian's test of the qualifications of the ambassadors from a far country. He must ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord, gain the true wisdom from God's Word by the Spirit, and obey the Scriptures.

The truth came out at last. What appeared to come from a distance was a next-door neighbor. At the end of three days the error was discovered. The princes had committed the people to the alliance, they had opened the way into Israel's bosom for the idolaters, and their oath had to be respected. No wonder "All the congregation murmured against the princes"; but God would not allow the evident lies of the Gibeonites to be an excuse for the evil that the princes had imposed upon the congregation through the exercise of their own wisdom, and through neglecting to humble themselves to ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord. Princes lead in the congregation of

God's people, and He allows the evil of their self-sufficiency to continue, and root it out they cannot-what is sown must be reaped.

Now, when the leaders in the Church of God, by their pride and self-sufficiency, allow alliances with God's enemies, be it of principles or of persons, the consequences must be borne by the Church. Never will the Church of God be seen again in its fidelity to Christ and in separation from the world, as it was at the first. In a limited way, the same truth applies to revivals among Christians, who in spirit in different ages have resorted to Gilgal, the camp, and have thence issued to victory. To the camp sooner or later Satan's ambassadors come, and there by the leaders they are received, and the tradition of men is accepted where the truth of God should alone prevail, with the result of weakness and eventual corruption.

In God's sovereign mercy to these Hivites, the Christian can rejoice. But the Christian cannot rejoice in their victory through deceit and lying, nor, in the defeat of the princes through their own self-sufficiency. Poor heathen they were, and for their lives they wrought; and though their lives were, spared, cursed were they, and under the ban, all their days. They were devoted to be slaves to the sanctuary, as the silver and gold at Jericho had been devoted in an absolute manner to Jehovah.

The princes of Israel of the present day, who effect alliances with enemies, and bring into the congregation things of the world, the flesh, and the devil, will never find God in His sovereignty making these evil things to serve in His sanctuary. On the contrary, the end of such alliances will be that the Hivites will get the Israelites into the slaves' place. In other, words, such ways will end where the energy of the book of Joshua ends, and where the book of Judges begins- in Bochim, Weeping.

Apostle's Prayer for the Philippians

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Phil. 1:9-11.

The Apostle prays that they might have all kinds of knowledge and spiritual judgment, so that they might do things just fit to be done-that they might know in what one thing differs from another-that they might be connoisseurs in the Christian path; not only not fall into sin, but have the knowledge of just the right thing to do in the circumstances, for the standard is the satisfying of the heart of Christ, not, Where is the harm? The Apostle desires that they might discern things now as they will be when brought into the light in that day of Christ. It is as if he said, I want you to think of the Lord Jesus, and know what will please the heart of Christ. There is the delight of pleasing Christ, and also the delighting in the thing that pleases Him, by the active energy of the Spirit of God.

At His Feet

Of all the disciples of Christ that pass before us in the gospel story, perhaps none are more marked by single-hearted devotedness to Christ than Mary of Bethany. She makes nothing of self, but everything of Christ, and hence, on the three occasions that she comes before us, she is found at the feet of Jesus.

We see her first in her sister's home at Bethany, when the Lord of life entered that home and Mary sat at His feet as a learner (Luke 10). Later, when death had entered the home, she is found at His feet as a mourner (John 11). Last, when a few of His loved ones make a supper for the Lord, who had just manifested His resurrection power and glory, she is found at His feet as a worshiper.

She not only knew that the Lord was the great teacher come from God, the One who can sympathize with us in our sorrows, and the Object of our worship, but she had experienced His teaching, tasted His sympathy, and worshiped at His feet.

Good for us if, like the Apostle Paul, we can each say that the desire of the heart is "That I may know Him." We may know much about Christ, but, in order to know Him we must be in His company and, at His feet, learn His mind through His word, taste His sympathy, and in His presence worship and adore.

It is true that the Lord delights to honor the one that puts honor upon Him in the day of His rejection, and has said that wheresoever the gospel is preached, the story of Mary shall be told for a memorial of her. But the story of Mary has also been recorded for our profit, for all Scripture is given by God for our instruction. May we then, as we read her story, profit by her lowly and devoted life.

1) At His feet as a learner (Luke 10:38-42). If, as sinners, we have been at the feet of the Savior discovering that, in spite of all our sins, He loves us and has died for us, then, if we are to make spiritual progress-if we are to be "meet for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work"-the "one thing needful," as believers, is to take our place at His feet and hear His word.

This plain but important truth is brought before us in the homely scene described in the five closing verses of the 10th chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Journeying on His way to Jerusalem, we are told that the Lord came to a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. She gladly opened her home to the Lord, and at once set herself to minister to His bodily needs. This indeed was right and beautiful in its place; and yet the story clearly shows that there was much of self in Martha's service. She did not like to have all the burden of this service, and felt grieved that she was left to serve alone. There was one thing lacking in her service.

The one thing needful-the one thing that Martha missed -was to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear His word. She loved the Lord, and with all her energy she zealously set herself to serve the Lord; but her zeal was not according to knowledge. She set herself to work without having first been in the company of the Lord, and in communion with the Lord, and therefore without being instructed

in the mind of the Lord through the word of the Lord. As a result she was "distracted with much serving" (J.N.D. Trans.), was "careful and troubled about many things," complaining about her sister, and even entertaining the thought that the Lord was indifferent to her labors.

Alas! do we not at times act like Martha? We may take up service according to our own thoughts, or under the direction of others. From morning to night we may busy ourselves in a continual round of activity, and yet neglect the one thing needful-to be alone with the Lord, and in communion with Him hear His word and learn His mind. Little wonder that we get "distracted" and "troubled about many things" and complain of others. How true it is that it is easier to spend whole days in a round of busy service, than half an hour alone with Jesus.

In Mary we see a believer who chose the "good part." Sometimes it is said that Mary chose the better part, as if Martha's part was good, but Mary's was better. It is not thus that the Lord speaks. He definitely says that Mary's part was "that good part," for she chose the "one thing needful"-to sit at His feet and hear His word.

Clearly then Mary had a keener perception of the desires of the heart of Christ than her sister. One has said, "Martha's eye saw His weariness, and would give to Him; Mary's faith apprehended His fullness, and would draw from Him."

Martha thought of the Lord as One who was requiring something from us; Mary discerned that, beyond all the service of which He is so worthy, the desire of His heart, and the great purpose of His coming into this world, was to communicate something to us. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"; and, at the end of His path He could say, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me" (John 17:8). By the Word of God salvation is brought to us (Acts 13:26); by the Word of God we are born again (1 Pet. 1:23); by the Word of God we are cleansed from defilement (John 15:3); by the Word of God we are sanctified (John 17:17); and by the Word of God we are instructed in all the truth of God "that the man of God may be... thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

May we not say that Martha set herself to do good works without having been thoroughly furnished by the Word of God. In Mary we learn that communion with Christ, and instruction in the word of Christ, must precede all service that is acceptable to Christ. He delights that, in His own time and way, we should minister to Him; but, above all, He delights to have us in His company that He may minister to us.

Mary chose this good part, and the Lord will not allow any complaints by her sister to belittle her choice-it shall not be taken from her. So, again, in the last days of the Church's history on earth, the Lord commends the Philadelphians, not for any great activity that would give them a prominent place before the world, but that they had "kept My word." Like Mary of old they set greater store on His word than their works. It is not, indeed, that Mary was without works, for having chosen "that good part," in due time the Lord commends her for doing "a good work" (Matt. 26:10). So with the Philadelphian saints, the Lord who commended them for keeping His word, is the One who can say, "I know thy works."

Of old, Moses could say of the Lord, "Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand: and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words." Deut. 33:3. This presents a lovely picture of the true position of God's people-held in the hand of the Lord-sitting at the feet of

the Lord, and listening to the words of the Lord. Secure in His hand; at rest at His feet; and learning His mind. May we then choose this good part, and in due course do the good work.

2) At His feet as a mourner (John 11:32). In the touching scene described in the 11th chapter of John, we again hear of the two sisters, Martha and Mary. Sickness had ended in death casting its shadow over the home. Their brother had been taken from them.

In their trouble they rightly turn to the Lord as their unfailing resource, and very blessedly they plead His love for their brother; for they say, "He whom Thou lovest is sick." This, indeed, was true; the Lord loved Lazarus, but we are also told that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." And as the story proceeds we are permitted to see the way love takes in order to declare, on the one hand, the glory of the Son of God and, on the other, the compassions of the heart of Jesus.

Further, we again see the difference between these two devoted women. Martha, who on the former occasion, had been cumbered with her service when the Lord of life and glory had visited her house, is now restless and distracted when death has come into the home. Mary who in the former day had listened to His word, can now quietly wait for Him to speak and act. Thus we read, "Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house." When, however, she received the word, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee," she at once acts in obedience to the word; for we read, "She arose quickly, and came unto Him."

"Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet." For the second time this devoted woman is found in the lowly place at the feet of Jesus. The Jews, mistaking her action, say, "She goeth unto the grave to weep there." She was doing that which is far better, that which faith alone can do; she was going to the feet of Jesus to weep there. To weep at the grave of a loved one, even the world can do, but it brings no comfort to the sorrowing heart. But to weep at the feet of Jesus is to find the comfort of His love; for we weep at the feet of One who, in His own time, can raise our dead, and, in the meantime, can comfort our hearts. So it came to pass that Mary, who had been at His feet as a learner, is now found at His feet as a mourner.

It is noticeable that in this touching scene there is no record of any word spoken by the Lord to Mary. This only we learn, that in the presence of her great sorrow, "Jesus wept."

The Jews wrongly interpret these tears as being a token of the Lord's love for Lazarus. He did indeed love Lazarus, but there was no need to weep for one that He was about to raise from the dead. It was the sorrow of the living that drew forth the tears of Jesus, as we read, "When Jesus... saw her weeping,... He groaned [grieved] in the spirit, and was troubled." And His trouble found vent in tears, for "Jesus wept."

In the days of old we read of Jehovah that, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psalm 147:3. In order to heal the brokenhearted He became flesh, and shed His tears to dry ours, and broke His heart to bind up our hearts.

And Jesus is still the same-"The same yesterday, and today, and forever." In our sorrows, and when our loved ones are taken from us, we still learn that our only real and lasting comfort is found in bowing at His feet, and pouring out our sorrow in the presence of the One who once wept with

these brokenhearted women.

3) At His feet as a worshiper (John 12). The beautiful scene that passes before us in the beginning of the 12th chapter of John, takes place just six days before the cross. The Lord's devoted life, in which self was ever set aside to serve others in love, draws to its close. At every step of His path He had been dispensing blessing-spreading a feast, as it were, for all the world. Now, at last, a few of His loved ones make a feast for Him, as we read, "There they made Him a supper."

Christ was in this needy world as a giver, but it was not often that anyone gave to Him. Once, in the beginning of His way, a few wise men "presented unto Him gifts" and had fallen down and "worshiped Him." Now, at the end of His path, they made a supper for Him and again one is found at His feet with her gifts as a worshiper.

Truly too there had been a moment when Levi had made Him "a great feast in his own house." There the Lord sat down with "a great company of publicans and of others" in order to dispense blessing to sinners. Now He sits down in company with a few of His own in order to receive the homage of saints.

Christ is the One for whom they made the supper-the Center of the feast and the Object before every heart. Lazarus and others are present, but, we read, they sat at the table with Him. The supper was for Him, and the guests were with Him. The blessedness and the greatness of the occasion was that He, the Son of God, was present.

Again, the two sisters, Martha and Mary, are present. Martha serves, but no longer is she cumbered with her service, or complaining of others. She thinks only of the One for whom they had made the supper. For the third time Mary is found at the feet of the Lord, but no longer to receive His words and His sympathy, but to give to Him the worship of a heart that loved Him; for Mary's gifts, Mary's acts, and Mary's attitude all breathe the spirit of worship.

Drawn by attachment of heart to Christ, she had sat at His feet, listened to His words, and learned something of His mind. Now we see that affection for Christ is the secret of all true service. Moved by this love for Christ, she does the right thing at the right moment. She might have left the ointment in the alabaster box, and presented it to Christ, but this would not have put the same honor upon Christ. She pours it out upon His feet. She does the right act. She might, at some earlier moment in the Lord's life, have anointed His feet with the ointment; but she waits until the hour of His going to the cross and the grave has arrived. Moved by the instincts of love she does the right act at the right moment, as the Lord can say, "Against the day of My burying hath she kept this." Christ was everything to Mary. Christ was her life, and all that she has is devoted to Him. The costly ointment, and the hair of her head-the glory of a woman-are used to put honor upon Christ. She is not even praising Him for all that He had done, or was about to do; but she bows at His feet as a worshiper because of all that He is.

Thus acting, she puts honor upon the One that the world had rejected and was about to nail to a cross. She forgets herself and her blessings, and thinks only of Christ. How blessed if, when we make Him a supper, in a like spirit of worship we could each one pass out of sight of ourselves and our blessings, and see no man any more save Jesus only and His glory.

Thus acting, we should, like Mary in her day, be misunderstood by the world, and even by many true disciples; but we should, also like Mary, have the approval of the Lord. In the eyes of the world her act was mere waste. So in Christendom today, Christianity is viewed merely as a system for making the world a better and a brighter place. The one great aim is to benefit man; all else is waste. In one parable the Lord likens the kingdom of heaven to a certain "king who made a wedding feast for his son." (J.N.D. Trans.) In the spirit of this parable the disciples had made a supper for the Lord, and Mary had put honor upon Christ. And though the world may condemn, the Lord approves, for He says, "Let her alone"; and again, in another gospel, He can say, "She hath wrought a good work upon Me." Indeed, so highly does the Lord appreciate Mary's act that He adds, "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matt. 26:13).

Moreover, the Lord can say, "Me ye have not always." It will be our privilege and our joy to worship Him in glory; but it was Mary's privilege, and it is still ours, to worship Him in the world where He is rejected, and in the face of the scorn and reproach of men. Mary seized the occasion to render to Him this precious service. As one has said, "She never could have recalled it in eternity.... Love will find new ways of expressing itself to Him then. But it will not be what He looks for from us now. There will be no self to be denied, no cross to be borne, no world to be surrendered, no reproach to be encountered then."

How blessed too was the effect of her act of devotion to Christ, for we read, "The house was filled with the odor of the ointment." Lazarus may hold sweet communion with Christ, and Martha may serve Christ; but Mary's act of worship, that was so precious to the heart of Christ, was also a joy to all that were in the house. That which gives honor to Christ will bring blessing to others.

We may rightly commune with Christ about many things; we may rightly serve Him in many ways, but the worship that makes everything of Christ, will surpass all else in the day when we make Him a supper. So will it be in that great day when all the redeemed are gathered home. The new song will be sung that renders praise to the Lord for all He has done. Heaven and earth will join to celebrate His glory; but, above all, we read of those who "fell down, and worshipped Him." Beyond all the mighty work that He has done, and beyond all the glory that He has acquired, He will be worshiped because of all that He is. Then we shall be able to say, "The heart is satisfied, can ask no more; All thought of self is now forever o'er; Christ, its unmingled Object, fills the heart In blest adoring love-its endless part."

Be Occupied With Christ

If the mind is filled with thoughts of Him, if we study the Bible to ascertain more and more clearly what Jesus was, and is, and what He wishes us to be, if we seek to be guided by His will moment by moment, we cannot fail to develop, by His grace, a truly Christ-like spirit.

It is as we continue "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," the glory of His spotless life, and of His complete and absolute surrender to the Father's will, that we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory." Mirrors can only reflect what is before them; in the same way, we can only reflect the likeness of our Master when He is before our minds.

The Bible: the Universal Book

"For, ever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89.

This Book contains: the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.

It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter.

Here, heaven is opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. CHRIST IS ITS GRAND SUBJECT, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

Live with it. Deeply and trustfully encourage its entrance into the soul; then you will know whether it gives light. Make the testimonies your delight; then they will become your counselors. Eat the Word, and see if it does not become the joy and rejoicing of your heart (Jer. 15:16).

The Bible is the full revelation of the mind and heart of God, and the Incarnate Word is the answer, confirmation, and fulfillment of the written Word. The more that is known of the story and scenes of the Bible, the more the spell and the splendor of the Book is increased in its magnetism and majesty. It holds the reader, while it awes him; it comforts him, though it condemns him; it woos him, but it wins him; it saves him, and is able to sanctify him as he reverently reads its message in humble reliance upon the constant and gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit, whose mission is to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us. The Bible finds its way where the living voice does not penetrate; it enters the sick chamber, and can minister to the weak and suffering, who are kept in seclusion; and it is at hand when oral teaching is not available.

It is history, poetry, prophecy, consisting of that which was spoken by the Lord in the past, is His voice for today, and His herald of tomorrow. It weaves the warp of the past into the woof of the future, telling alike of joy and sorrow; songs and lamentations; reward and punishment; danger and safety; light and darkness; life and death; salvation and judgment; and grace and law. It is living, and it will never cease to operate infallibly (Heb. 4:12; J.N.D. Trans.); its gospel shall be preached and men shall be convicted of sin, and brought to Christ and joyfully and royally welcomed, until He shall rise up and shut the door (Luke 13:25).

This Book is the greatest traveler in the world. It penetrates to every country, civilized and uncivilized. It is seen in the royal palace and in the humble cottage. It is the friend of emperors and

beggars. It is read by the light of the dim candle amid Arctic snows. It is read under the glare of the equatorial sun. It is read in city and country, amid the crowds and in solitude; and wherever the message is received, it frees the mind from bondage, and fills the heart with gladness.

Men need life; therefore men need the Bible. It is the only Book this world has ever had that brings spiritual and eternal life to men; it is the only Book that is itself living - alive. "The word of God... liveth and abideth forever." Men need a Book like this, and they could not write it themselves; so God provided it, and "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Pet. 1:21.) The Bible reveals what men could never discover for themselves; and it is written, that "Ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." John 20:31. Adapted

A Breakdown: King Asa

Faith has its mountings up, but it has often its breakings down. Human experiences teach us a little, but few can tell the whole tale. God's biographies teach us much, for He can tell us the whole.

Asa's history is one of those records written by the finger of God, that cannot fail to instruct. (Read 2 Chron. 14; 15, and 16.) How brightly his reign begins; and ten years of peace and quiet are connected with an activity of faithful service which shows that Asa was walking before God. Altars were taken away, and Judah was taught to seek the Lord.

He rested not, however, in his security; he said not, "Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." God gave him rest, but he prepared himself for war; he built fenced cities, and he had an army of mighty men.

Now comes the test of faith. Zerah appears on the scene, and Asa goes out to Mareshah to meet him; but he leans (relies or "rests," v. 11) on God. There are few more beautiful prayers in trouble than the firm, confident cry of Asa, "LORD, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee."

God answered the prayer, and smote the Ethiopians before Asa; and the people "carried away very much spoil." Chapter 15 tells the result of this glorious victory, but even in victory God sends a note of warning by Obed, "The LORD is with you, while ye be with Him."

Twenty-six years pass over Asa, and now chapter 16 opens with another scene. Baasha comes against Asa, and he who met Zerah in the name of the Lord goes to meet Baasha in the name of Benhadad, king of Syria; and he robs God's house and his own house to bribe the world's power to help him against his enemy. What a breakdown we have here! He who was strong as a lion against the Ethiopian with his thousand thousand men and three hundred chariots, quails before the ungodly king of Israel.

Why this change? God was the same; circumstances were less critical; but Asa had changed. He had taken another staff to lean on, and therefore God had left him to his own devices; and, after the shame and dishonor had been reaped, he sends Hanani the seer who says, "Because thou hast relied [or leaned, the same word as in chap. 14: 11] on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand," and winds up with the following precious word of promise, "The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him."

Alas, that thirty-six years should so end! But these things are written for our admonition, and are profitable for teaching, for conviction, for setting straight what has gone crooked, and for discipline in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

The backsliding soul is slow to hear the voice that reproves, and Hanani is put in prison. Has Asa fallen so low, and his conscience become so seared? Yes, it is so. For three years God's forbearance waits, and then again His hand is on the wayward child, and he is smitten with disease in his feet. But, unhumbled still, he seeks not to the Lord in his extremity, but to the physicians. After two years of suffering he dies, and his sun sets amid clouds of gloom.

Man may bury with all honors, and may make a great burning of sweet odors and spices, but Asa's old age was not borne witness to by God; and we may conclude, as we are not told to the contrary, that he died leaving God's servant, His faithful seer, in prison. Deeply sad is all this. He who ran so well and so long, broke down at the end, and passed away as one saved by fire.

We are only safe as we enter into Paul's experience and say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." As if to give emphasis to these words, the Apostle adds, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:12-14.

Herein lies our only safeguard against those most terrible breakdowns which we see in Solomon, in Asa, in Demas, and in others who once ran well, but were hindered by the world, the flesh, and the devil. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. 2:10.

Christ for Us

One of the greatest blessings the soul can have is the power of entering into the refreshment the Lord Jesus Christ had while He was on the earth, and it is that which makes the scene between Himself and the dying thief so precious; not only that poor thing finding light through an open door, but the thought is so exceedingly precious, that He who saved that thief saw in him one of the fruits of the travail of His soul; so precious, that He should there see fruit of His travail, before he could turn and crave a blessing, and to hear Him speak of blessing to that poor thing before He cried out with a loud voice and gave up the ghost.

It is very solemn, in connection with those who are members of His body and one spirit with Him, that the Lord's eye comes in to search everything in them, and that He knows all intents and thoughts of the heart and mind. But if He did not, we could not get such a blessed thing as One ever living to make intercession for us; for if He did not, He would not know how to make it available for us. Directly He sees in us something that needs it, He pleads with God; and not only He sees it, but He makes us see it. All is discovered to us. He makes us see every infirmity, every mark of spiritual disease, that we may know His healing; and He makes us accord in character with the place we are in, in Him.

It is so blessed, the way that the Lord teaches us about Himself as a living Person; and there is no place where we have Him as a living Person more than in the wilderness. We are all impatient to see Him up there, but it would not be the same thing if we had not seen and known Him in the wilderness. He is the Object in whom God presents His own character, and as we pass through the turmoil of life, what can strengthen us in it? What can help us, save the seeing Him, the living Christ, for us? When He takes us into the light, and shows us that all flesh is as grass, what can sustain and settle the heart but the thought of that One, the unchangeable One, occupied with us? Sin in us, He apart from it altogether, and yet for us. The Lord in heaven was Paul's living book.

Faith should be energetic, active; I am not told to be merely musing about the glory; but the certainty of Christ's having apprehended me for it, is to set me looking right forward, pressing onward to the goal. What is feeling for Christ if it does not separate the heart from the world? It is a different thing, saying, I know the cross, and saying, I have found the thing which I can go round and round the world glorying in, filled with astonishment and delight.

Christ in the Vessel: Mark 4:35-41

Mark 4:35-41

"Man's extremity is God's opportunity." This is a very familiar saying. It often passes among us; and, no doubt we fully believe it; but yet when we find ourselves brought to our extremity, we are often very little prepared to count on God's opportunity. It is one thing to utter or hearken to a truth, and another thing to realize the power, of that truth. It is one thing, when sailing over a calm sea, to speak of God's ability to keep us in the storm, and it is another thing altogether to prove that ability when the storm is actually raging around us. And yet God is ever the same. In the storm and in the calm, in sickness and in health, in pressure and in ease, in poverty and in abundance-"The same yesterday, and to-day, and forever"-the same grand reality for faith to lean upon, cling to, and draw upon at all times and under all circumstances.

But alas! alas! we are unbelieving. Here lies the source of the weakness and failure. We are perplexed and agitated when we ought to be calm and confiding; we are casting about when we ought to be counting on God; we are beckoning to our partners when we ought to be "looking unto Jesus." Thus it is we lose immensely, and dishonor the Lord in our ways. Doubtless, there are few things for which we have to be more deeply humbled than our tendency to distrust the Lord when difficulties and trials present themselves; and assuredly we grieve the heart of Jesus by thus distrusting Him, for distrust must always wound a loving heart. Look, for example, at the scene between Joseph and his brethren in Genesis 50: "And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him." It was a sad return to make for all the grace and love and tender care which the injured Joseph had exercised toward them. How could they suppose that one who had so freely and fully forgiven them, and spared their lives when they were entirely in his power, would, after so many years of kindness, turn upon them in anger and revenge? It was indeed a grievous wrong, and it was no marvel that "Joseph wept when they spake unto him." What an answer to all their unworthy fear and dark suspicion! A flood of tears! Such is love! "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

Thus it was with the disciples on the occasion to which our paper refers. Let us meditate a little on the passage.

"And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves

beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow."

Here then we have an interesting and instructive scene. The poor disciples are brought to their extremity. They are at their wits' end. A violent storm-the ship full of water- the Master asleep. This was a trying moment indeed, and assuredly we, if we look at ourselves, need not marvel at the fear and agitation of the disciples. It is not likely that we should have done better, had we been there. Still, we cannot but see wherein they failed. The narrative has been penned for our learning, and we are bound to study it and seek to learn the lesson which it reads out to us.

There is nothing more absurd and irrational than unbelief, when we come to look at it calmly. In the scene before us, this absurdity is very apparent; for what could be more absurd than to suppose that the vessel could possibly sink with the Son of God on board? And yet this was what they feared.

It may be said, They did not just think of the Son of God at that moment. True, they thought of the storm, the waves, the filling vessel; and, judging after the manner of men, it seemed a hopeless case. Thus it is the unbelieving heart ever reasons. It looks only at the circumstances, and leaves God out. Faith, on the contrary, looks only at God, and leaves circumstances out.

What a difference! Faith delights in man's extremity, simply because it is God's opportunity. It delights in being "shut up" to God-in having the platform thoroughly cleared of the creature, in order that God may display His glory- in the multiplying of empty vessels, in order that God may fill them. Such is faith. It would, we may surely say, have enabled the disciples to lie down and sleep beside their Master, in the midst of the storm. Unbelief, on the other hand, rendered them uneasy; they could not rest themselves, and they actually aroused the blessed Lord out of His sleep by their unbelieving apprehensions. He, weary with incessant toil, was snatching a few moments repose while the vessel was crossing the sea. He knew what fatigue was; He had come down into all our circumstances. He made Himself acquainted with all our feelings and all our infirmities, being in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted.

He was found as a man in every respect, and as such, He slept on a pillow, and was rocked by the ocean's wave. The storm beat upon the vessel, and the billows rolled over it, although the Creator was on board in the Person of that weary, sleeping Workman.

Profound mystery! The One who made the sea, and could hold the winds in His almighty grasp, lay sleeping in the hinder part of the ship, and allowed the sea and the wind to treat Him as unceremoniously as though He were an ordinary man. Such was the reality of the human nature of our blessed Lord. He was weary-He slept, and He was tossed on the bosom of that sea which His hands had made. Oh! reader, pause and meditate on this wondrous sight. Look closely, think deeply. No tongue, no pen, can do justice to such a scene. We cannot expatiate; we can only muse and worship.

But, as we have said, unbelief roused the blessed Lord out of His sleep. "They awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" What a question! "Carest Thou not?" How it must have wounded the sensitive heart of the Lord Jesus! How could they ever think that He was indifferent to their trouble and danger? How completely must they have lost sight of His love, to say nothing of His power, when they could bring themselves to say, "Carest Thou not?"

And yet, dear Christian reader, have we not in all this a mirror in which to see ourselves reflected? Assuredly we have. How often in moments of pressure and trial, do our hearts conceive, if our lips do not utter the question, "Carest Thou not?" It may be we are laid on a bed of sickness and pain, and we know that one word from the God of all power and might could chase away the malady and raise us up; and yet the word is withheld. Or, perhaps we are in need of temporal supplies, and we know that the silver and gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, belong to God, yea, that the treasures of the universe are under His hand; and yet, day after day rolls on, and our need is not supplied. In a word, we are passing through deep waters; in some way or another, the storm rages; wave after wave rolls over our tiny vessel; we are brought to our extremity; we are at our wits' end, and our hearts often feel ready to send up the terrible question, "Carest Thou not?" The thought of this is deeply humbling. To think of our grieving the loving heart of Jesus by our unbelief and suspicion, should fill us with the deepest contrition.

And then the absurdity of unbelief! How can that One who gave His life for us—who left His glory and came down into this world of toil and misery, and died a shameful death to deliver us from eternal wrath—how can such a One ever fail to care for us? But yet we are ready to doubt, or we grow impatient under the trial of our faith, forgetting that the very trial from which we so shrink, and under which we so wince, is far more precious than gold; for the former is an imperishable reality, whereas the latter must perish in the using. The more genuine faith is tried, the brighter it shines; and hence the trial, however severe, is sure to issue in praise and honor and glory to Him who not only implants the faith, but also passes it through the furnace and sedulously watches it therein.

But the poor disciples failed in the moment of trial. Their confidence gave way; they roused their Master from His slumber with that most unworthy question, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" Alas! what creatures we are! We are ready to forget ten thousand mercies in the presence of a single difficulty. David could say, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul"; and how did it turn out? Saul fell on Mount Gilboa, and David was established on the throne of Israel. Elijah fled for his life at the threat of Jezebel; and what was the issue? Jezebel was dashed to pieces on the pavement, and Elijah was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. So here, the disciples thought they were going to be lost, with the Son of God on board; and what was the result? The storm was hushed into silence, and the sea became as glass by that voice which of old had called worlds into existence. "And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

What a combination of grace and majesty is here! Instead of rebuking them for having disturbed His repose, He rebukes those elements which had terrified them. It was thus He replied to their question, "Carest Thou not?" Blessed Master! Who would not trust Thee? Who would not adore Thee for Thy patient grace and unupbraiding love?

There is something perfectly beautiful in the way in which our blessed Lord rises, without an effort, from the repose of perfect humanity into the activity of essential deity. As man, wearied with His work, He slept on a pillow; as God, He rises and, with His almighty voice, hushes the storm and calms the sea.

Such was Jesus, very God, and very man; and such is He now, ever ready to meet His people's need, to hush their anxieties, and remove their fears. Would that we could only trust Him more simply. We have little idea of how much we lose by not leaning more on the arm of Jesus, day by

day. We are so easily terrified. Every breath of wind, every wave, every cloud, agitates and depresses us. Instead of calmly lying down and reposing beside our Lord, we are full of terror and perplexity. Instead of using the storm as an occasion for trusting Him, we make it an occasion of doubting Him. No sooner does some trifling trouble arise than we think we are going to perish, although He assures us that not a hair of our head can ever be touched. Well may He say to us, as He said to His disciples, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" It would indeed seem, at times, as though we had no faith. But oh! His tender love! He is ever near to shield and succor us, even though our unbelieving hearts are so ready to doubt and suspect. He does not deal with us according to our poor thoughts of Him, but according to His own perfect love toward us. This is the solace and stay of our souls in passing across life's stormy ocean homeward to our eternal rest. Christ is in the vessel. Let this ever suffice. Let us calmly rely on Him. May there ever be, at the very center of our hearts, that deep repose which springs from real trust in Jesus; and then, though the storm rage and the sea run mountains high, we shall not be led to say, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" It is impossible for us to perish with the Master on board; nor can we ever think so, with Christ in our hearts. May the Holy Spirit teach us to make a fuller, freer, bolder use of Christ. We really need this just now, and shall need it more and more. It must be Christ Himself laid hold of and enjoyed in the heart by faith. Thus may it be to His praise and our abiding peace and joy!

We may just notice in conclusion the way in which the disciples were affected by the scene on which we have been dwelling. Instead of the calm worship of those whose faith had been answered, they manifest the amazement of those whose fears had been rebuked. "They feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Surely they ought to have known Him better. Yes, Christian reader, and so should we.

Christ — Unselfishness: the World — Selfishness

One thing impressed my mind most peculiarly when the Lord was first opening my eyes - I never found Christ doing a single thing for Himself. Here is an immense principle. There was not one act in all Christ's life done to serve or please Himself. An unbroken stream of blessed, perfect, unfailing love flowed from Him, no matter what the contradiction of sinners - one amazing and unwavering testimony of love, and sympathy, and help. But it was ever others, and not Himself, that were comforted; and nothing could weary it, nothing could turn it aside. Now the world's whole principle is self, doing well for itself (Psalm 49:18).

Men know that it is upon the energy of selfishness they have to depend. Everyone that knows anything of the world knows this. Without it the world could not go on.

What is the world's honor? Self. What its wealth? Self. What is advancement in the world? Self. They are but so many forms of the same thing. The principle that animates the individual man in each is the spirit of self-seeking. The business of the world is the seeking of self, and the pleasures of the world are selfish pleasures. They are troublesome pleasures too, for we cannot escape from a world where God has said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground"; etc. Toil for self is irksome; but suppose a man finds out at length that the busy seeking of self is trouble and weariness, and having procured the means of living without it, gives it up - what then? He just adopts another form of the same spirit of self and turns to selfish ease.

I am not now speaking of vice and gross sin (of course everyone will allow that to be opposite to the spirit of Christ), but of the whole course of the world. Take the world's decent, moral man, and is he an "epistle of Christ"? Is there in him a single motive like Christ's? He may do the same things; he may be a carpenter as Christ was said to be (Mark 6:3), but he has not one thought in common with Christ.

As to the outside, the world goes on with its religion and its philanthropy. It does good, builds its hospitals, feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, and the like; but its inward springs of action are not Christ's. Every motive that governed Christ all the way along is not that which governs men; and the motives which keep the world going are not those which were found in Christ at all.

The infidel owns Christ's moral beauty, and selfishness can take pleasure in unselfishness; but the Christian is to "put on Christ." He went about doing good all the day long; there was not a moment but He was ready as the servant in grace of the need of others. And do not let us suppose that this cost Him nothing. He had not where to lay His head; He hungered and was wearied; and, when He sat down, where was it? Under the scorching sun at the well's mouth, while His disciples went into the city to buy bread. And what then? He was as ready for the poor, vile sinner who came to Him as if He were not hungry, neither faint and weary. He was never at ease. He was in all the trials and troubles that man is in as the consequences of sin; and see how He walked! He made bread for others, but He would not touch a stone to make it into bread for Himself.

As to the moral motives of the soul, the man of the world has no one principle in common with Christ. If then the worldling is to read in the Christian the character of Christ, it is evident the world cannot read it in him; he is not a Christian; he is not in the road to heaven at all, and every step he takes only conducts him farther and farther from the object in view. When a man is in a wrong road, the farther he goes in it, the more he is astray.

Christianity in Contrast With Mosaic Economy

We shall place before the reader, a passage or two of Scripture in which the moral glories of Christianity shine forth with peculiar luster, in vivid contrast to the entire Mosaic economy.

First of all, let us take that familiar passage at the opening of the 8th of Romans, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." vv. 1-4.

Now, we must bear in mind that verse 1 sets forth the standing of every Christian-his position before God. He is "in Christ Jesus." This settles everything. He is not in the flesh; he is not under law; he is absolutely and eternally "in Christ Jesus." Hence there is-there can be-no condemnation. The Apostle is not speaking of or referring to our walk or our state. If he were, he could not possibly speak of "no condemnation." The most perfect Christian walk that ever was exhibited, the most perfect Christian state that ever was attained, would afford some ground for judgment and condemnation. There is not a Christian on the face of the earth who has not, daily, to judge his state and his walk-his moral condition and his practical ways. How then could "no condemnation" ever stand connected with, or be based upon, Christian walk? Utterly impossible. In order to be free from all condemnation, we must have what is divinely perfect, and no Christian walk is or ever was that. Even a Paul had to withdraw his words (Acts 23:5). He repented of having written a letter (2 Cor. 7:8). A perfect walk and a perfect state were only found in One. In all beside-even the holiest and best-failure is found.

According to the most accurate translations, the second clause of Rom. 8:1 is not in the original manuscript; it is not Scripture. This, we think, would be seen by anyone really taught of God, apart from all question of mere criticism. Any spiritual mind would detect the incongruity between the words "no condemnation" and "walk." The two things cannot be made to harmonize. And here, we doubt not, is just where thousands of pious souls have been plunged into difficulty as to this really magnificent and emancipating passage. The joyful sound, "no condemnation," has been robbed of its deep, full, and blessed significance by a clause introduced by some scribe or copyist whose feeble vision was, doubtless, dazzled by the brightness of that free, absolute, sovereign grace which shines in the opening statement of the chapter. How often have we heard such words as these, "Oh! yes; I know there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. But this is if they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Now I cannot say that I walk thus. I long to do so, and I mourn over my failure. I would give worlds to be able to walk more perfectly; but, alas! I have to judge myself- my state, my walk, my ways, each day, each hour. This being so, I dare not apply to myself the precious words, 'no condemnation.' I hope to be able to do so some day, when I have made more progress in personal holiness; but, in my present state, I should deem it the very height of presumption to appropriate to myself the precious truth contained in the first clause of

Romans 8."

Such thoughts as these have passed through the minds of most of us, if they have not been clothed in words. But the simple and conclusive answer to all such legal reasonings is found in the fact that the second clause of Rom. 8:1 is not in the original text at all, but a very misleading interpolation, foreign to the spirit and genius of Christianity; opposed to the whole line of argument in the context where it occurs; and utterly subversive of the solid peace of the Christian.

We cannot but think that the occurrence of the clause, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," in verse 4, affords abundant evidence of its misplacement in verse 1. We cannot for a moment admit the thought of redundancy in Holy Scripture. Now, in verse 4, it is a question of walk- a question of our fulfilling "the righteousness of the law"; and hence the clause is in its right, because divinely fitted, place. A person who walks in the Spirit-as every Christian ought-fulfills the righteousness of the law. Love is the fulfilling of the law; and love will lead us to do what the ten commandments could never effect; namely, to love our enemies. No lover of holiness, no advocate of practical righteousness, need ever be the least afraid of losing aught by abandoning the legal ground, and taking his place on the elevated platform of true Christianity-by turning from mount Sinai to mount Zion-by passing from Moses to Christ. No; he only reaches a higher source, a deeper spring, a wider sphere of holiness, righteousness, and practical obedience.

And then, if anyone should feel disposed to ask, "Does not the line of argument which we have been pursuing tend to rob the law of its characteristic glory?" We reply, Most assuredly not. So far from this, the law was never so magnified, never so vindicated, never so established, never so glorified, as by that precious work which forms the imperishable foundation of all the privileges, the blessings, the dignities, and the glories of Christianity. The blessed Apostle anticipates and answers this very question in the earlier part of his epistle to the Romans. "Do we then," he says, "make void the law by faith? Far be the thought: no, but we establish the law." Chap. 3:31; J.N.D. Trans. How could the law be more gloriously vindicated, honored, and magnified than in the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ? Will anyone seek, for a moment, to maintain the extravagant notion that it is magnifying the law to put Christians under it? We fondly trust the reader will not. Ah! no; all this line of things must be completely abandoned by those whose privilege it is to walk in the light of the new creation; who know Christ as their life, and Christ as their, righteousness-Christ, their sanctification; Christ, their great Exemplar; Christ, their model; Christ, their all in all; who find their motive for obedience not in the fear of the curses of a broken law, but in the love of Christ, according to those exquisitely beautiful words, "The love of Christ"-not the law of Moses" constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." 2 Cor. 5:14, 15.

Could the law ever produce anything like this? Impossible. But, blessed forever be the God of all grace, "What the law could not do"-not because it was not holy, just, and good, but-"in that it was weak through the flesh"-the workman was all right, but the material was rotten, and nothing could be made of it; but, "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who"-as risen with Christ, linked with Him by the Holy Ghost, in the power of a new and everlasting life -"walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

This, and only this, is true, practical Christianity; and if the reader will turn to the 2nd of Galatians, he will find another of those fine, glowing utterances of the blessed Apostle, setting forth, with divine force and fullness, the special glory of Christian life and walk. It is in connection with his faithful rebuke of the Apostle Peter, at Antioch, when that beloved and honored servant of Christ, through his characteristic weakness, had been led to step down for a moment from the elevated moral ground on which the gospel of the grace of God places the soul. We cannot do better than quote the entire paragraph for the reader. Every sentence of it is pregnant with spiritual power.

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face" - he did not go behind his back to disparage and depreciate him, in the view of others, even though-"He was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid [or, far be the thought]. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." For, if the things were right, why destroy them? And, if they were wrong, why build them again? "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live" not by the law, as a rule of life, but "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain [or has died for nothing]." vv. 11-21.

Here then we have one of the very finest statements of the truth as to practical Christianity, anywhere to be found. But what specially claims our attention just now is the very marked and beautiful way in which the gospel of God opens up the path of the true believer between the two fatal errors of legality, on the one side, and carnal laxity, on the other. Verse 19, in the passage just quoted, contains the divine remedy for both these deadly evils. To all-whomever or wherever they are who would seek to put the Christian under the law, in any shape or for any object whatsoever-our Apostle exclaims in the ears of dissembling Jews with Peter at their head, and as an answer to all the law-teachers of every age, "I... am dead to the law."

What can the law have to say to a dead man? Nothing. The law applies to a living man, to curse him and kill him, because he has not kept it. It is a very grave mistake indeed to teach that the law is dead or abolished. It is nothing of the sort. It is alive in all its force, in all its stringency, in all its majesty, in all its unbending dignity. It would be a very serious mistake to say that the law of England, against murder, is dead. But if a man is dead, the law no longer applies to him, inasmuch as he has passed entirely out of its range.

But how is the believer dead to law? The Apostle replies, "I through the law am dead to the law." The law has brought the sentence of death into his conscience, as we read in Romans 7. "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me."

But there is more than this. The Apostle goes on to say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And here is the triumphant answer of the Christian to those who say that, inasmuch as the Mosaic law is abrogated, there is no longer any demand for the legal restraint under which the Jews were called to live. To all who would seek liberty for self-indulgence, the answer is, "I... am dead to the law," not that I might give a loose rein to the flesh, but "that I might live unto God."

Thus nothing can be more complete, nothing more morally beautiful, than the answer of true Christianity to legality on the one hand, and licentiousness on the other. Self crucified; sin condemned; new life in Christ; a life to be lived to God; a life of faith in the Son of God; the motive spring of that life, the constraining love of Christ. What can exceed this? Will any one, in view of the moral glories of Christianity, contend for putting believers under the law, putting them back into the flesh-back into the old creation-back to the sentence of death in the conscience-back to bondage, darkness, distance, fear of death, condemnation?

Is it possible that any one who has ever tasted, even in the very feeblest measure, the heavenly sweetness of God's most blessed gospel, can accept the wretched mongrel system, composed of half law and half grace, which Christendom offers to the soul? How terrible to find the children of God, members of the body of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, robbed of their glorious privileges and burdened with a heavy yoke which, as Peter says, "Neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." We earnestly entreat the Christian reader to consider what has been placed before him. Search the Scriptures; and if you find these things to be so, then fling aside forever the grave clothes in which Christendom enwraps its deluded votaries, and walk in the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free; tear off the bandage with which it covers the eyes of men, and gaze on the moral glories which shine with such heavenly brilliancy in the gospel of the grace of God.

And then let us prove by a holy, happy, gracious walk and conversation, that grace can do what law never could. Let our practical ways from day to day, in the midst of the scenes, circumstances, relationships, and associations in which we are called to live, be the most convincing reply to all who contend for the law as a rule of life.

Finally, let it be our earnest, loving desire and aim to seek, in so far as in us lies, to lead all the dear children of God into a clearer knowledge of their standing and privileges in a risen and glorified Christ. May the Lord send out His light and His truth in the power of the Holy Ghost, and gather His beloved people round Himself to walk in the joy of His salvation, in the purity and light of His presence, and to wait for His coming.

Lessons in Defeat: Part 1

Joshua 7

"Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mightest see" (Rev. 3:18).

Considerations essentially practical to Christian warfare are brought out in this chapter. The conduct of Israel before Jericho teaches what the behavior of the soldiers of Jesus Christ should be in the world, while the lessons of Ai show what Christian conflict too frequently is in its actual workings. In the end, at Ai, as at Jericho, victory was assured through grace; and it is written for us, whatever our defeats, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:18).

Before victory, among God's people, there is invariably dependence on God, and prayerful following of His Word; and by these means God prepares His own for beholding His glorious work. But such are our hearts that, in the very victory God gives us, we are apt to begin to trust in self and to loosen our girdles. The path to victory is usually a safer one than the vantage ground of success obtained. Never more than in a time of marked blessing is a truly watchful and prayerful spirit needed; never more than when God gives victory do soldiers of Christ require to apply to themselves the practical truth of circumcision. Indeed, defeats often arise from absence of care in the hour of success.

Each hour of the week of warfare around Jericho had shown Israel's utter inability to conquer in their own strength, and had proved that in every sense the conquest was of God. At the very moment of victory, God had given Israel warning what each soldier should shun, "lest ye make yourselves accursed." But Israel had in spirit departed from their strength. Sin in the camp occasioned defeat, and the pride of the army hindered the discovery of the sin.

In God's history of events before Ai, He lifts the veil previous to His record of a single step taken by Israel, so that the reader of His Word may not fail to enter into His thoughts about the sin in the camp. His finger points out the evil hidden in the midst of Israel, long before they discovered its presence (Josh. 7:1). Had they been walking humbly, they would have sought God before the battle, and He would have indicated that evil was among them; then their humiliation would have been alone with God, and on their faces they would have received His word to clear themselves. But their pride prevented dependence on God.

No evil can be hidden in our individual hearts, or among a company of God's people, of which lie is ignorant. No deception, no lie, is compatible with God's presence, or with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And if we do not feel the evil among us, we are lacking in communion with God. On this point, instead of excusing ourselves, we require to be firm and stern with our souls. God creates misgivings in His saints, or makes them sensible, through His Spirit dwelling in us, that something is wrong, when they are near Him in heart. In the absence of this godly state of soul, God allows the evil to develop till, by feeding on its fruits of misery, His people at length are so humiliated that they are forced to humble themselves. Then, once more, the watchful and prayerful spirit is found,

and God again allows a victory to arise.

God never alters His principles of government because of His ways of grace. Israel was flushed with the pride of success; therefore He allowed them to find out, by means of their defeat, that He was angry with them, sin being in their midst. They had committed a trespass; they had deceived a deceit; they had "sinned" and "dissembled also." Achan, the troubler, was representative of the people; the sin of one was that of all; the corporate body was affected by the guilt of the unit. Now, as a matter of fact, Christians usually discover the presence of sin among them, which God hates, by the result of His chastening, and too seldom discern it as dear children in His presence, under the gentle eye of His love. Spiritual discernment, to which most lay claim as a matter of course, is really a fine fruit of the Spirit of God, and by no means that common hedgerow plant which many regard it to be.

Israel looked at Ai as contemptible. Its name-"a heap of ruins"-suggests that it was not like Jericho-a mighty city and fortified. Had it been a powerful place, maybe Israel would have sought God about its overthrow; but the language of the spies (after they had gone up and viewed the country) -"Make not all the people to labor thither; for they are but few"-indicates confidence in their own strength, instead of trust in God for Ai's destruction. Truly recognizing God as our strength alone, we hang on Him as much for the small as for the great 'enemies. Do we not know practically how that little enemies occasion great defeats?

Alas for the pride of victory! Could Christians boast in the number, of their converts if they really believed that by God the Spirit each one had been born anew? Could teachers of the Word vaunt themselves in their knowledge, if realizing that they were themselves taught of God? Those who walk in pride, God is able to abase; His "great name" requires humility in Man-a divine principle man is slow to learn.

On went Israel, knowing not that their sin had separated them from God. Their chosen three thousand were confident of success; but they fled before the men of Ai, who "chased them from before the gate," and smote them. Their courage, built on self-confidence, broke down completely, "wherefore the hearts of the people melted and became as water."

The self-confident despair in defeat, while those who draw upon divine resources strengthen themselves in God in the day of trouble. Adversity and anguish in natural things brings out real moral greatness in men; so in things spiritual, the really great spirit is manifest when everything seems to be adverse. David, in his dark hour, encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Joshua, like most men, almost blamed God for the overthrow. The effect, not the cause, seems to have filled his soul-the defeat, not the reason of it. "Alas," he cried in his bitterness-"Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us?"

A man really praying to God speaks out the truth of what is in his heart. This lamentation proved how far from the spirit of self-judgment Israel was; for to their leader it seemed that the seeds of sorrow were sown not in the camp, but in the heavens of God. Yet this need occasion no surprise, as usually the last place we are wont to search for the cause of our defeat is the state of our own souls. We may, perhaps, say we needed this sorrow; but seldom do we recognize why we needed it.

Let us now turn and engage ourselves with the more healthy spectacle of the nation, representatively through its elders, lying low before the Lord. The praying attitude of these leaders is most hopeful. Their defeat had sent them to God. Would God such an attitude, spiritually speaking, might in this proud day, be that of those who suffer defeats before a heap of ruins, as the world may be termed when we recognize what it really is in God's sight. God revealed the secret of the discomfiture to the elders of Israel, when they were prostrate in His presence before the ark; and He did this despite the lack of absolute self-judgment which seemed to mark Joshua's lamentation. No doubt in the want of this rare quality lay the cause of the secret of the defeat not being discovered earlier, for from morn till even the nation of Israel knew not the cause. Pride stands in the way of true discernment; defeat may send us to God; yet, notwithstanding this, unless we rightly judge ourselves, our hearts remain in the dark as to the cause which hinders God from prospering us.

When Joshua had reached the very depth of his lamentation, and had reckoned all Israel as clean cut off, he touched the name of Jehovah, saying, "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" This question, asked at the end of the day, called forth the answer of Jehovah as to the cause of Israel's trouble. God was acting among them for the glory of His great name. Because of His great name, were their defeat and slaughter. What a heart-searching discovery! To all appearance the defeat of God's people denied the greatness of the name of their God, but God sets His glory above appearances; His name is greater than His people's successes; His character is bound up in His name; His army, His Israel, had sinned. To the natural eye, the sight of men stricken by the hand of their God, might indeed awaken the question, Is

God among them? To the spiritual understanding, the truth is evident, that the honor of the great name of the Lord demands in His people purity and humility, cost what it may.

Jehovah's answer to His servant, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" is again a lesson. How had Joshua been lying upon his face? "Thus"-despairing and practically casting the cause of Israel's defeat upon God. To lie upon the face before God is the only true attitude a believer can take in a season of shame and dishonor; to affect any other is but to add the sin of pride to that which causes the defeat. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." Jas. 4:10. True humiliation before God is our only "door of hope" (Hos. 2:15) for blessing in a day of distress; but to lie "thus"-not judging ourselves, but blaming God-is not humility.

The spirit which chafes under defeat will not recognize the cause of defeat. True humility is rarer than diamonds. The question in the camp was of Israel's sin, their unconfessed and, therefore, unforgiven sin. God required this question first to be settled. That accomplished, He would use His people for His glory. Arise, for how could prayer that confessed not sin be availing? Sin had to be cast out. Action to this end was required by God.

"Israel hath sinned." The army of the Holy One, sent to destroy the wickedness in Canaan, had opened its bosom to the very iniquities it was sent to sweep away. The holy God had allowed for the greatness of His name that the sword of the Amorite should be His rod of chastisement upon His people. Thus does God allow Satan to sift His saints. He allows the "Amorites" against whom we contend, to smite us when we trifle with sin. If evil be allowed in the camp, and pride in the heart, let none be surprised that, when striving with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, Satan, the rebel, becomes God's sword against His own people.

Lessons in Defeat: Part 2

The cause of Israel's defeat was given by Jehovah: "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed." Terribly solemn words!-Israel "accursed," God's own people under His ban. Such is the effect of sin-such its inevitable consequences. Terrible is the sinfulness of sin before our holy God who is a consuming fire.

The corporate responsibility of the nation is here shown unmistakably. That great principle lies written upon the earliest dealings of God with Israel, and God changes not. Christian corporate responsibility cannot be ignored, unless God Himself be defied. Christians cannot regard themselves as isolated units in the army of God. The acts of one affect others. "One sinner destroyeth much good" (Eccles. 9:18). The sin of one works harm in a multitude; and, because of the evil of one, all are defeated, and become as weak as water.

The promise of prosperity in the wars in Canaan was contingent upon Israel's obedience. Now in Achan they had not only sinned, they had transgressed a plain command. The accursed, or devoted, thing had been taken in contravention of the command of God, laid upon Israel before the destruction of Jericho-"The city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD:... and ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the Loan." Josh. 6:17-19. Not a shred nor a shekel from Jericho did God allow Israel for their personal glory or wealth. Nothing was to be appropriated by those who were called to execute the ban of God on the Canaanite. Now Achan had laid hands both upon the garment and the gold, both on that which was accursed to the fire, and that which was devoted to Jehovah's treasury. Achan was a prince in Israel; and it is often through the leaders, and not through the rank and file of God's army, that sin and sorrow are introduced. Achan coveted the garment of Shinar, the silver, and the wedge of gold, and he hid them in his tent; and thus were found in the midst of Israel the very things God commanded not to be touched.

The embroidered garment was desired for self-glorification, the silver and gold for self-advancement; all were surreptitiously introduced into the camp-coveting, taking, dissembling, being mingled in the sin.

The garment was of Shinar. See verse 21. The place Babylon occupies in the ways of men toward God, and in the great judgments of God on men, must not be overlooked. Babel was the first organized attempt to establish a name for man, and a center of human union, in opposition to divine authority. Babel, in the plains of Shinar, was the resolute apostasy of man from God. There God came down, scattered the race of man, and turned their power of greatness into confusion. And this will He do in the latter day, when spiritual Babylon once more rises into power!

The plain of Shinar had its manufactories when God destroyed Jericho, and Satan did wisely in bringing, through Achan's covetousness, the cloak of Babylon into the camp at Gilgal. At the very moment Israel was being used as God's executive to destroy the stronghold which was the key to Canaan, then the accursed thing, the princely robe in its attractive form, was being secreted in their midst! Just at the hour of the baring of Jehovah's mighty arm, and when His treasury should have been honored, He was being robbed by His own people. Thus the camp of Gilgal, Israel's place of separation to Him, was leavened with the accursed thing, and Israel was made thereby a curse.

The exceeding solemnity of divine holiness commands us in this scene, and we can but inquire, What in our day answers to the accursed thing which caused the camp of Israel to be a curse? The garment was obviously for purposes of self-glorification. Being a robe from Shinar, it was characteristically an emblem of that early apostasy in which man exalted himself in opposition to God. Israel, in Canaan and circumcised, were separated to Jehovah, their strength. Our, circumcision, the putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, and our separation to God, are in Christ risen from the dead. Now when a believer, warring for his risen Lord, seeks his own glorification, even by reason of the Lord's using him, he is really exalting himself. He covets to adorn himself in the very things of the flesh upon which he knows God has passed the sentence of fire, and thus in measure he is in spirit like Achan. And, if he would use the silver and the gold belonging to the Lord's treasury for his own advantage, he is again like Achan, and -will pierce himself through with many sorrows. Our sins must sooner or later find us out.

Longings after the goodly Babylonish garment, after self-glorification, and thereby robbing God of His glory, are common enough, alas! Too many soldiers of the Lord in heaven have this buried in their tents. How exalted I am! is the secret name of this robe. In the tent, in the inner life, in the home circle, the truth of our desires comes out. And God sees us as we really are. Achan certainly never wore the garment for all Israel to admire. Whether his own personal friends extolled its glory, or whether he never so much as flung it over his shoulders, was of no difference before God, to whose eye the sin was manifest.

The greater the profession of holiness and separation to God a Christian makes, the more urgent upon him is God's demand for practical resemblance to Jesus our Lord. If we recognize our blessings in the heavenly places in Christ being over the Jordan of death and judgment, and if we assert that we are dead with Christ to the world, and risen with Him and alive to God, all the more terrible will be our reaping day, should we do the very things our doctrines deny; such behavior is in absolute contradiction to the Christian profession, and such as practice it are like Achan.

It is remarkable how allied in spirit are the two great marks of God's displeasure with His Jewish and Christian people, at the commencement of their respective careers on earth. In the early days of Israel's history in Canaan, as in the early days of Christianity, we find God swiftly judging evil among His people, and bringing out into the light the secret sins of those who were seemingly for Him on the earth. Ananias and Sapphira, as Achan, "dissembled." But God is not deceived. It is for us to open our eyes upon our own actions, and to seek to see ourselves as God sees us. God's moral laws can never be tampered with by His people with impunity. Our secret sins are all bare in the light of His countenance; "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). Dissembling also will sooner or later be published from the housetops. Let

servants and soldiers of Christ study their own secret objects, lest by self-seeking they, in the end, trouble not only their own souls, but defile and trouble the camp,'

In the solemn lessons to be gathered from this scene, let not these words of the Lord to defeated Israel, "Sanctify yourselves," be neglected. His word was not, Look to your arms, but, Look to the state of your hearts. Holiness is the requisite for victory. "There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you." Their hands were to cast out the sin from their midst; they themselves were to put it out from among themselves ere they could again wield the sword. All Canaan, and its contending hosts, might know, it mattered not, how the army of God lay under the ban, and could never triumph more till the glory of Jehovah's great name was re-established in the camp; and the casting out of the evil from their midst was the only way whereby God would again be among them. Most Christians, who have lived to middle life, have lived sufficiently long to see men once valiant for God and used by Him, lying, under His stern hand of government, withered and practically worthless, as servants unused and disowned, because they have not heeded His word, "Sanctify yourselves."

In his energy, "Joshua rose up early in the morning," and brought Israel by their tribes before the Lord. Sifting from tribe to family, from family to man, the transgressor was in due course manifested. Where men are honest in their desire to clear themselves from iniquity, God will enable them to sift out till the seeds of the sin are discovered; and when He begins, He will make an end. And more, the force of God's presence draws out from man the confession of sin. If the root of bitterness be not discovered, the reason is, God is staying His hand because of the carnal state of His people. Wherever sin lies unconfessed, God is afar off in our thoughts. It is utterly impossible to be before God, and not to be absolutely truthful, down into the deepest depths of the soul.

At the seat of judgment, God will bring every secret thing into the light; everything now covered will be revealed; and at this hour, those hidden souls among God's people, which bar the manifestations of His presence, would be exposed, confessed, and cast out, were His saints truly before His face.

Achan confessed his sin, pronounced publicly what had been in his breast. The messengers ran, dug up the accursed thing, and laid it out in the broad daylight before Jehovah. None of the shame of the sin was hidden, no hushing up of iniquity for the sake of peace dreamed of; the truth, not policy, prevailed; for the question on that solemn day of heart searching was, Jehovah or man?

As all Israel were involved in the dishonor done to Jehovah by their prince, so all Israel joined hands in clearing their camp. "All Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire." And more, Israel was at that hour in no mood to smooth the memory of their sorrow. "They raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor [that is, trouble], unto this day."

The valley of Achor is the door of hope for God's people still. Through that valley, where stands the witness of iniquity cast out, and the memory of our shame, remains to this day the pathway to blessing. Weeping over our pride, and putting away from us our sins, ever lead to renewed victories. "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.

Deliverance From the Power of Sin

This chapter may be justly called the chapter of the New Testament that shows how God has delivered us from what we were as children of Adam, from sin - the sinful nature that is in us - and shows us too the real power for holiness of life and walk down here. The question of holiness is sometimes raised, and the fact that sin has power over them, instead of their having power over it, is what troubles many Christians. There are thousands of the Lord's people who are in that difficulty. But it is a remarkable thing that those who talk so much about holiness, and their difficulties as to it, often overlook what is to be found in this important chapter.

God will deliver us from sin and all its consequences when we are in glory; but there is also deliverance from its power now, although we still have it in us.

The word "holiness" is twice mentioned in this chapter, in verses 19 and 22, both of which speak of practical holiness of walk while in this world. It will help greatly to the understanding of the chapter to notice that its main truth is set forth in three consecutive verses-10, 11, and 12. I will first take them up as a whole, and afterward speak of them more in detail.

Verse 10 is what is true of Christ alone. In verse 11 the Spirit of God says, so to speak, "What is true of Him is true of you, because He took your place before God on the cross"; and faith believes this. Verse 12 is, "Carry it out in practice." We first get what is true of Christ. When the Spirit of God wants to teach us something about ourselves, He speaks of Christ first, then says that "what is true of Him is equally true of you," and ends with, "Now carry it out." "Likewise" in verse 11 is very significant. Likewise; that is, in the same way as Christ. Christ died unto sin once; likewise reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin. Christ is now alive unto God; likewise reckon ye yourselves to be alive unto God.

In verse 12 we get another word which is full of meaning - "therefore" - that is a conclusion drawn from what goes before. This verse implies two things: first, that the sin is in our mortal bodies; second, that instead of it having power over us, we have power over it. If I say to a man, "Don't let that child come into the room," I imply that he has the power to keep him out. So when God says, "Let not sin... reign," it implies that you have the power to carry it out.

This chapter unfolds the way of deliverance from the power of sin now, while we are down here in the body - "the end everlasting life" (v. 22). The end is coming by-and-by - the end of all exercises of soul, and trials and troubles. Precious thought! But let me now take up these verses a little more in detail.

In verse 10, is what is true of Christ only: "In that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." I am quite sure that numbers of the Lord's people read this verse as if it said, "died for sin."

But it is not so. What, however, does it mean when it says He "died unto sin once"? We will just look at one or two scriptures that might help us, as it is very important to the understanding of the

next verse, that we should catch its meaning. "He [that is, God] hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." 2 Cor. 5:21. What a wonderful truth! I could not attempt to explain it, and I suppose we shall not fully comprehend it throughout eternity. He was not made sin in His life when He trod the earth in spotless purity. He was not made sin in the garden of Gethsemane when He prayed to the Father in such an agony that He sweat as it were great drops of blood. It was not then, but on the cross, when He hung there and was forsaken of God, that He was made sin. What passed between God and His Son during those three hours of darkness we are not told; but at the close that cry was heard, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But Scripture is totally silent as to what took place during those hours when darkness covered all the land. God drew a veil over the scene. Ah! dear friends, just think of it; God made Him to be sin for me (speaking individually), because nothing else would fit me for His presence in glory.

Have you ever noticed the difference between this verse in Corinthians, and 1 Pet. 2:24? "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." There, you see, it is the sins - actual offenses committed. In 2 Cor. 5:21, He was made sin; that is different. It is important to see that the Lord Jesus was not only there to bear our sins, but all the depth of our evil, sinful nature - sin, root and branch - all came out before God then. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin.

The next scripture I will ask you to look at is Rom. 8:3. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." That expression, "sin in the flesh," means sin in our flesh, as children of Adam. The evil of our nature not only came out before God, but was judged and condemned there and then. God there saw an end of it. This verse is blessed: "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." It is not a mere, bare doctrine. Think of God's Son going under all the waves and billows of God's judgment! "God sending His own Son." Why does it say "own"? It reminds us of the love that He has to the beloved Son. Think how He loved His Son; or, as the Lord Jesus in Mark 12:6 speaks of it (let us turn to the passage), "Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved." He had only one Son. We know how fond parents are of an only son. That does not express all. He must add something - "His well beloved." So in Rom. 8:3 it is not dry doctrine, but a question of God's heart of love. The Spirit reminds us of it, so to speak. Just think of it! And then think of that God who "sent Him," "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all"; and then think of that beloved Son "made... sin for us." When He was on the cross, sin in the flesh was judged and condemned. He alone could sustain that awful weight, and not be crushed under it. He did sustain it.

He said, "It is finished." Let us turn to the chapter. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." John 19:30. Those who understand the Greek language say that the word for "gave up the ghost" means that He gave up the ghost by the action of His own will. He laid down His life, we know. He had "power to lay it down" (John 10:18).

Now in verse 10 of Romans 6, "He died unto sin once." The death of the Lord Jesus was the death of One who had undergone the judgment of God against sin, and had died to it. He died to sin - has done with it forever. He is never going to come in contact with it again in that way for all eternity.

The illustration given in verse 16 of Romans 6 will help us to understand the application of this to us. It speaks of sin being a master, and we its slaves. However tyrannical a master may be, a slave cannot get rid of him by giving notice to leave, like our servants can. However hard a master he may have, he is bound to him for life. But the time comes when that slave reaches a deathbed, and now he slips out of his master's grasp, out of that state and condition in which he was a slave; he dies to his master.

"In that He died, He died unto sin once." He has done with it forever. But have you ever seen that you are as clear as He is in God's sight? You do not question for a moment whether He is clear of it, but do you question whether you are free of it? "If I am dead to sin, why should I feel this working of sin in me?" Many think that verse 11 means, "Carry this truth into practice." But it is rather that faith accepts what is true of me in God's sight, and believes what God says. And thus we can reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin, because in God's sight we are so. What foolishness it would be for me to say to you, Reckon yourself to be the king of some certain country. Why? Because it is not true of you. But in God's sight we have as much died to sin as that blessed One has, and thus God can say to us, You may reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin.

I purposely did not quote just now the latter part of verse 10 - "In that He liveth, He liveth unto God" - because I wish to look at it separately in connection with verse 11. When John was in the isle of Patmos, and saw One like unto the Son of man, he fell at His feet. And He laid His right hand upon him. How would you feel to have the right hand of that living, glorified Christ laid upon you? He said to John, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one: and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages." Rev. 1:17, 18; J.N.D. Trans. He is the living One. "In that He liveth, He liveth unto God." It is not simply that He is alive. I cannot explain it, but I suppose that Christ as alive from the dead need never be occupied with sin again, or come in contact with it as the sin-bearer. He is free from death, judgment, and sin forever.

Now comes our side of it. You may count that you live to God in the same way. Have you ever done that? It is just as much an exhortation to reckon ourselves to be alive unto God as to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin. And in God's sight, as in Christ, we are as much delivered from sin as we shall actually be delivered from it when we shall be in glory. We have nothing about practice in this verse. It is faith that believes what God says about me. God says, as it were, "I have given Christ; He has died to sin; so have you. He is alive to God; so are you." As to a matter of fact, for a time, just for a little while, sin is in you still, but it is not for long.

Verse 12 - "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." Now as I said before, that verse proves first that sin is there; but it says also that you need not obey it. Do not pay any attention to what it says; you need not obey it. See what a power that gives us - that we have done with it as much as Christ has. I have only got it in me for a short time while I am in this body, but I have not to obey it any more than the slave of whom I have spoken, if he were to be raised, would have to obey his old master. "No," he could say, "I have died out of your hands, and am beyond your control." The old master has no power to tell you to do anything. I can say, "I shall not pay any more attention to what he says now; he has no right over me."

There is one more thing. Not only do not obey him, but do not let sin, that old master, have the members of your body as instruments to use. You used to use them in the service of sin; but now they are no longer to be used in the service of sin; they are to be used as instruments of

righteousness unto God. The eyes, feet, hands, and the tongue - these are the members of our body. Ah! the tongue. You remember what we read in Jas. 3:5 about the tongue: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." And verse 6 too. Oh, how solemn! This is one of the members we are not to let sin have. So in verse 2, "In many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." I picked out this verse because the Spirit of God says that if you will not let sin have your tongue, you will be able to govern or bridle your whole body! How much the tongue can do! We often say things we are sorry for afterward. What mischief the tongue can cause! Yield not your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God. Sin may come in, and try to usurp a claim over them, but do not let it.

I would just refer to one more verse in the end of the chapter (v. 21) - "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" But in verse 22, "Now" - what have you got now that ye are "become servants to God"? "Your fruit unto holiness, and the end" (there's the end you see) - "the end everlasting life." Instead of death, the wages of sin, when that bright and blessed end comes, for us it is "everlasting life." Then we shall not only be delivered from the power of sin but from its presence too.

But God looks at every believer as in Christ, as much delivered from sin now as we shall be in glory.

God grant that we may not give our members any more to the service of sin, but to His service who has done so much for us. Amen.

Depth of Desire

Whatever makes Christ more precious, makes the Bible more precious. The more we see the glory of Christ, the more we long to know Him fully, and so the more eagerly do we turn to that Word in which He has revealed Himself. It is vain for a man to claim to be leading a consecrated life if he is not found often and earnestly engaged in the study of God's Word.

Encouragement for Trying Circumstances

Read Job 3; Jer. 20:14-18; Matt. 11:25-30

The Spirit of God in the above scriptures has furnished us with a very striking and edifying contrast.

Job opened his mouth and cursed his day. He sighed for rest, but sought it amid the shades of death and in the darkness of the tomb. Dismal rest!

In the prophet Jeremiah we see the same thing. Both these beloved and honored saints of God, when overwhelmed by outward pressure, lost for a moment that well-balanced condition of soul which genuine faith ever imparts.

Now the blessed Master stands before us in Matthew 11 in glorious contrast. That chapter records a number of circumstances which seem entirely against Him. Herod's prison would seem to have shaken John the Baptist's confidence. The men of that generation had refused the double testimony of righteousness and grace in the ministry of John, and of Christ Himself. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum had remained impenitent in view of His "mighty works." What then? Did the Master take up the language of His servants Job and Jeremiah? By no means. His perfect will was perfectly blended with that of His Father; and hence, "At that time [when all seemed against Him] Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father,... for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Here it was that Jesus found His rest. And here it is that He invites all who "labor and are heavy laden" to "find rest." He does not point us to the grave as our resting place; but He graciously stoops down and invites us to share His yoke with Him-to drink into His "meek and lowly" spirit-to bear about a mortified will- to meet the darkest dispensations, and the most trying circumstances, with a "thank God," and an "even so." This is divine "rest." It is rest in life, and not in death - rest in Christ, and not in the grave.

Reader, do you ever find yourself disposed to wish for the grave as a relief from pressure? If so, look at the above scriptures. Think of them, pray over them, and seek to find your rest where Jesus found His, in having no will of your own.

We often think that a change of circumstances would make us happy. We imagine if this trial were removed and that deficiency made up, we would be all right. Let us remember, when tempted to think thus, that what we want is not a change of circumstances, but victory over self. May the Lord ever give us this victory, and then we shall enjoy peace.

Endurance in Service

If our ministry is to have power, and our gospel testimony efficacy, it will only be as our souls rise above their failings, and the failure of all around, and as with the hand of faith we grasp the hand of the unfailing God, and lay hold of the promises of His Word. It was thus Abraham triumphed over the sorrow of laying his Isaac on the altar; and it is thus we triumph over all sorrow from within or from without over all difficulty that meets us in the path of obedience, and overall weakness that results from our own failures and shortcomings. It is the consideration of the faithfulness of God; that will raise us up out of our feebleness or our unbelief.

I will not work my soul to save,

For that the Lord has done;

But I will work like any slave

From 'love to God's dear Son.

Enjoyment

We must be careful not to confound what is exclusively God's work with what is our responsibility.

It is God the Holy Spirit who leads us into enjoyment; our responsibility is to see that we do not grieve Him (Eph. 4:30).

Every Christian, whether a babe, a young man, or a father (1 John 2:13), has the blessed privilege of communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; there is nothing higher, and it is fullness of joy (1 John 1:4).

It cannot, however, be expected that a babe should have such deep communion as a father; but he may have fullness of joy, and in time he may grow up to be a father-not by making his growth an object, but by feeding on Christ he grows (John 6:48, 57).

The moment enjoyment is pressed as an object, Christ, the true Object, is displaced.

The prayer of the Apostle (Eph. 3:14-21) was that God might so work in the saints, that they might be filled to all the fullness of God. Well may we say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," who has taken up such as we are, to fill us with His fullness, and display in the ages to come, the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us by Christ Jesus.

Do not grieve that Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30); then you will have fullness of joy, not by making joy an object, but Christ, who is everything, and in all (Col. 3:11).

Eternal Life: What the Scripture Says About It

We know nothing about eternal life but what God has graciously revealed to us by His Spirit in the written Word. May we turn to it with reverence and godly fear, and receive its teaching with worshiping hearts, while remembering that the Spirit searches "the deep things of God," and makes us "know the things that are freely given to us of God."

Scripture teaches us that "eternal life" was promised before the world began. We read also of "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus," and that "the gift of God is eternal life through [rather, in] Jesus Christ our Lord." (Titus 1:1, 2 Tim. 1:1; Rom. 6:23.)

We learn also that "eternal life" was with the Father. Father and Son being correlative terms, it is impossible to exclude the thought that He who was the eternal life was also the eternal Son. He was "that eternal life, which was with the Father." As with the Father, eternal life was in the Person of the eternal Son before He became flesh.

But eternal life has been "manifested." Precious truth! "The Word of life" has been seen and heard, looked upon and handled. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory..." (John 1:14). "That eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John 1:1, 2). In His whole life, ways, words, and being, eternal life was so manifested that it was seen, heard, and declared. The life was manifested in the perfection of His Person, in perfect love, obedience, and righteousness, in unbroken communion with the Father, and care for others; yea, the very "words" of our incarnate Savior were "spirit" and "life." He was "the life" and "the truth" seen and heard. A great mystery indeed, which cannot be explained by human language. Like the vessels of the sanctuary which the Kohathites knew were to be borne by them, but were so concealed from their view that they dare not touch, much less uncover them, under penalty of death, they were to bear them as Jehovah had commanded, but not to "touch" them "lest they die." (Numb. 4:15.)

The deep sin of the human mind is attempting to unfold and explain that of which the Spirit says, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh"; and again, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." (1 Tim. 3:16; Matt. 11:27.) Unfathomable mystery indeed! When the believer thus calls to mind His lowly and lonesome path through this scene, and discerns in "the man of sorrows" "the true God, and eternal life," his heart becomes filled with joy and gladness. He adoringly worships, and finds real delight in confessing and serving Him. In the gospel by John we see eternal life manifested in the Son; the first epistle of John treats of the character of eternal life as communicated to believers.

But though eternal life was promised, was with the Father, and in due time was manifested unto us, how could it lay hold on us who were such sinners? The answer is, Love was also manifested, and reached its immeasurable climax in the death of Christ, God's Son,

His death upon the cross; for in this way God's gift of eternal life could be communicated to us. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into

the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:9. Thus we learn that by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ two marvelous blessings have been secured for us - 1) the removal of our sins judicially and forever by the one offering of Himself, and 2) that we might live through Him. Here again our souls are touched with the infinite and unfathomable love of God toward us, and we are filled with thanksgiving and praise. Divine grace so wrought that we might thus "live through Him"; for our Lord said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:24. Yes, men must be judicially cleared from their sins by the sacrifice of Christ in order to stand in true relationship to God. What unutterable love "that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." How impossible to contemplate such grace through righteousness without the heart exclaiming-

"Everlasting praises be

To the Lamb that died for me."

And further. In resurrection-the resurrection of the Son from the dead, by which He was marked out Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness - we behold Him alive again, and that for evermore. By divine power, and in divine righteousness, God has intervened and raised Him from among the dead, and glorified Him as man at His own right hand. Now we read that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." Not only "through" Him who bore the judgment for us, but "in" Him glorified. The Son is its source. Nothing in us has helped to bring it about or to produce it. It is the gift of God, and in the Son. He said, "I am... the life." It is then for us a new and eternal life, both through and in the Son, and the gift of God. What divine wisdom, love, and power are thus brought into view! Are we not ready to cry out, while looking up to Him who said, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" - "Shall Thy praise unuttered lie?"

The gift of God then is eternal life - nothing less than eternal life. We therefore read of an inspired apostle writing to believers, and saying, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." 1 John 5:11-13. Thus the believer on the Son of God has received the wondrous gift of eternal life, the source and seat of which is, not in Adam, but in the Son. An entirely new life has been communicated to us, and we are to know that we have it. We are said to "have passed from death unto life." The effects of having this life are love to the brethren, obedience, righteousness, communion, and prayer, into all which the Spirit surely leads; in short, to walk as He walked, for all these ways were perfect in Him who is our life. Nothing can be more clearly set forth in Scripture than the present possession of eternal life. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." Though communicated to us, it is in the Son as the source and fountain, and enjoyed by us through feeding upon Him.

We were dead, dead in sins, until by grace we heard the voice of the Son of God and lived - "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). Till we had faith in the atoning work of the Son of man, we had no life in us; then such have eternal life; and Jesus added, "I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54). What divine certainty these words give us of being in glory with the Savior! Can we wonder at anyone saying, "Oh, how precious is

the truth that the life, such as it was with the Father, such as it is in the Son, is given to me"?

But besides having eternal life, and because we have remission of sins and are sons, the Holy Spirit has been given to us as the seal, the earnest of our inheritance, and the anointing. Thus we have the power for communion with the Father and the Son, and to joyfully serve and honor our Lord Jesus Christ. (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15; 15:13; Eph. 1:13, 14.)

Having received the life which is in the Son, we are to manifest it in our mortal body. Holding as we should the flesh for dead, we are to be "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." 2 Cor. 4:10. While in a world so contrary to God, with the flesh in us, and Satan blinding and deceiving sinners and tempting saints, we are to reckon ourselves to have died with Christ, and, as created in Christ Jesus, alive unto God, we are to manifest the life of Jesus in our mortal flesh. This is practical Christianity. For such, to live is Christ.

We also find that Timothy was enjoined to "lay hold on eternal life." Had he not received the gift of eternal life? Most assuredly he had. But for such to "lay hold on eternal life" is to grasp it by faith in all its glorious and eternal results when we shall "reign in life" (Rom. 5:17).

We thus lay hold on all that eternal life involves, and so make it our own by faith and hope, that its blessedness, as made known to us in the Word of God, and to be consummated when we are with Christ and like Christ, may be enjoyed now. This glorious prospect being before us, and the Spirit revealing Him to us, we shall be led on, Christ reproduced in our life and walk, and we detached from what is unsuited to Him.

It is clear that when the Lord reigns, the saved of the tribes of Israel, and Gentiles also, will go into life eternal in an order, no doubt, suited to people blessed on the earth. (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46.)

But Christ is to be manifested again. When the incarnate One was on earth, as we have seen, eternal life was manifested. Then He was alone. But when He is manifested in glory, "the sons of God" will be manifested with Him. "When He shall appear [or be manifested], we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." And we also read that "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear [or be manifested], then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Thus, when the mortal body is changed, and fashioned like unto His body of glory, we shall be conformed to the image of the Son, to the everlasting praise of the glory of His grace. Being already alive spiritually, we look for the Savior to change our body of humiliation, and fashion it like unto His body of glory. We have eternal life already; but when the Savior comes, the "hope of eternal life" will be realized in the corruptible putting on incorruptibility, and the mortal putting on immortality. This we know will take place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Precious fruit of divine grace!

While Christianity in truth begins, as we have seen, with the possession of eternal life, and this life is in the Son, "the end" is also eternal life, but all "the gift of God." We have eternal life while we are going on "in the hope of eternal life." We find redemption also presented to us in Scripture in the same way. We have redemption now, and we are waiting for redemption. Of the believer it is said, "In whom [Christ] we have redemption through His blood," and yet we are waiting for "the redemption of our body." (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 8:23.) The same may be noticed as to salvation - we are saved, and yet we look forward to salvation. We re-receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our

souls (1 Pet. 1:9), and yet "shall be saved from wrath through Him." The same inspired writer says that "who hath saved us," also says, "We look for the Savior... who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." This change and translation we are elsewhere told will take place when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. Then, having eternal life in all its glorious issues, we share with Christ the Father's presence in the Father's house, in all the unutterable blessedness of eternal glory.

The Faith of Joshua and Caleb

Numbers 26

This, though one of the longest chapters in the book of Numbers, does not call for much in the way of exposition. In it we have the record of the second numbering of the people, as they were about to enter upon the promised land. How sad to think that, out of the six hundred thousand men of war which were numbered, at the first, only two remain - Joshua and Caleb! All the rest lay moldering in the dust, buried beneath the sand of the desert, all passed away. The two men of simple faith remained to have their faith rewarded. As for the men of unbelief, the inspired Apostle tells us, Their "carcasses fell in the wilderness" (Heb. 3:17).

How solemn! How full of instruction and admonition for us! Unbelief kept the first generation from entering the land of Canaan, and caused them to die in the wilderness. This is the fact on which the Holy Ghost grounds one of the most searching warnings and exhortations anywhere to be found in the compass of the inspired volume. Let us hear, it! "Where fore.... Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was He grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Heb. 3:7-4:2.

Here lies the great practical secret -the Word of God mixed with faith. Precious mixture! - the only thing that can really profit anyone. We may hear a great deal; we may talk a great deal; we may profess a great deal; but we may rest assured that the measure of real spiritual power - power to surmount difficulties - power to overcome the world - power to get on -power to possess ourselves of all that God has bestowed upon us-the measure of this power is simply the measure in which God's Word is mixed with faith. That Word is settled forever in heaven; and if it is fixed in our hearts by faith, there is a divine link connecting us with heaven and all that belongs to it; and, in proportion as our hearts are thus livingly linked with heaven and the Christ who is there, shall we be practically separated from this present world, and lifted above its influence. Faith takes possession of all that God has given. It enters into that within the veil; it endures as seeing Him who is invisible; it occupies itself with the unseen and eternal, not with the seen and temporal. Men think possession sure; faith knows nothing sure but God and His Word. Faith takes God's Word and locks it up in the very innermost chamber of the heart, and there it remains as hid treasure - the only thing that deserves to be called treasure. The happy possessor of this treasure is

rendered thoroughly independent of the world. He may be poor as regards the riches of this perishing scene; but if only he is rich in faith, he is the possessor of untold wealth - "durable riches and righteousness" - "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Reader, these are not the pencilings of fancy - the mere visions of the imagination. No; they are substantial verities - divine realities, which you may now enjoy in all their preciousness. If you will only take God at His word - only believe what He says because He says it (for this is faith), then verily you have this treasure, which renders its possessor entirely independent of this scene where men live only by the sight of their eyes. The men of this world speak of the positive and the real, meaning thereby what they can see and experience; in other words, the things of time and sense - the tangible - the palpable. Faith knows nothing positive, nothing real, but the Word of the living God.

Now it was the lack of this blessed faith that kept Israel out of Canaan, and caused six hundred thousand carcasses to fall in the wilderness. And it is the lack of this faith that keeps thousands of God's people in bondage and darkness when they ought to be walking in liberty and light-that keeps them in depression and gloom, when they ought to be walking in the joy and strength of God's full salvation - that keeps them in fear of judgment, when they ought to be walking in the hope of glory - that keeps them in doubt as to whether they shall escape the sword of the destroyer in Egypt, when they ought to be feasting on the old corn of the land of Canaan.

Oh! that God's people would consider these things in the secret of His presence and in the light of His Word! Then indeed they would better know and more fully appreciate the fair inheritance which faith finds in the eternal Word of God; they would more clearly apprehend the things which are freely given to us of God in the Son of His love. May the Lord send out His light and His truth, and lead His people into the fullness of their portion in Christ, so that they may take their, true place, and yield a true testimony for Him, while waiting for His glorious advent!

First Adam and Second Adam Contrast

What was the first Adam, when set in his little territory in the garden of Eden, to the eye of God, compared with the second Adam ?-that One, the giver of eternal life, the smitten Rock, who in a moment could fill ten thousand souls with streams of living water. What a contrast! he whose days in the garden of Eden were but a span, whose beginning, a little handful of dust, God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life; and that One, the eternal life in the bosom of the "Father before all worlds-He who could speak the word and give life to corruption-He, the One in whom God could accept those taken out of the pit where they had fallen; having -chosen them in Him before the foundation of the world, to fill them with all spiritual blessings in Him. G.V.W.

The First Years of Christianity: Christianity Begun

“Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God” (John 20:17). He had wrought redemption. They were no longer merely Jewish disciples, but for the first time He calls them His brethren. They were in the same relation to His Father and God in which He stood Himself—one with Him in resurrection. These were their true Christian privileges, the true standing now of every believer, whether he knows it or not; for they knew it not. At that moment they had very sad hearts. Mary came and told the glad news. They were gathered together the same day at evening. They did not yet form the Church, but they were the persons, and were together a striking figure of the Church, as we shall soon see.

Being together, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews, “came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.” What a picture of the assembly, as Jesus had said, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). He had made peace by the blood of the cross—peace now flowed to them from the heart of God, from the lips of Jesus. Let us not forget this, the first word of resurrection, “Peace.” This characterizes Christianity—peace with God, through the finished work of Christ. “He showed unto them His hands and His side.” “It is finished,” He had said, and died. “Peace be unto you.” He is risen from the dead. “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” There could be no question as to whether it was the same Jesus. His hands and His side proved that. If we know how much was involved in His resurrection, surely we may well be glad also. Oh, blessed beginning of Christianity! First words of the risen Savior, “Peace be unto you.” Still He speaks. Do you hear Him? Do you believe Him? Are you glad?

But mark, He speaks again. “Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” As His missionaries, His servants sent forth, the very first qualification is “Peace.” This is a true mark of one sent of Christ—“Peace”—the peace of God, even as Jesus served and suffered in perfect peace, peace with God, and the peace of God. Thousands of ministers made by men are strangers to “peace”; but no man is a true minister of Christ without it. And as the new creation had now begun, “He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” Another qualification in order to go and proclaim the forgiveness of sins.

Luke continues the inspired narrative in the Acts. Forty days did Jesus remain, showing Himself to His chosen apostles, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, commanding them not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard from Me. They were to be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. At that time they had no idea of the Church, or this present period of grace to the Gentiles, but were looking for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. He opens up quite another work for them—a work that they never fully understood or performed.

After the Holy Spirit should have come, He says, “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” How little

they, how little we, respond to the heart of Christ! And now instead of setting up the kingdom in Israel, "While they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." There was the cloud, emblem of the divine presence, and He was taken from them. And while they gazed up into heaven, two heavenly witnesses assured them that "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Thus, if we think of Christianity as a kingdom, it is the kingdom in mystery, for the King is in heaven; hence, Matthew calls it the kingdom of heaven.

As a kingdom, while the King is in heaven, there are in it both wheat and tares—the children of God, and the children of the devil. In the kingdom is seen the work of man, and the work of Satan. But the Church, the body of Christ, is quite another thing. What He builds shall stand forever. Jesus says, "I will build MY church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Let us keep these two things distinct, as we now enter more fully on "That which was from the beginning." The greatest possible mistake is to presume that that which man builds, is the same as that which Christ builds.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all of one accord in one place." Everything was now ready for the descent of the Holy Spirit, that the Church might be formed. He could not be thus given until Jesus was glorified. If the Church had been an earthly society, seeking salvation, it might have been formed while Jesus was here. But redemption must be accomplished. Jesus must be raised from the dead and received up to glory, before He, the Spirit, could be sent to form the Church. People have no idea what an entirely unknown and new thing the Church was. There had been for centuries Jews and Gentiles, but now a third company is formed. The disciples then were all together in one place, when a mighty rushing sound from heaven was heard in Jerusalem, and it filled the house where they were sitting. And they were all, not merely the apostles, but they were all filled with the Holy Spirit; and a marvelous miracle bore witness to the presence of the Holy Spirit. They began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. The Jews who came together, who were present in Jerusalem from various nations, heard them speak in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. There was great amazement and wonder.

Peter, an unlettered fisherman, then stood up and preached such a discourse as had never been heard on this earth. Fifty days before, this very Peter knew not the scriptures that Jesus must rise from the dead. He now opens the Scriptures, and preaches Jesus of Nazareth, the risen and exalted Lord and Christ of God. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.... Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

This then is the first great truth according to the promise of Jesus: the Holy Spirit is now come and convicts of this dreadful sin. They believed not on Him, but crucified and killed Him whom God had sent from heaven. He whom this world has murdered, God has raised from the dead, and made both Lord and Christ. Conviction of this terrible sin seizes their hearts, and makes them cry out, "What shall we do?"

Is the reader unconverted? Do you know that you also belong to that world which has killed and rejected the Lord Jesus, now seated at the right hand of God? And what must they do? "Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The very enemies and murderers must become the very disciples of Jesus, and they must fully confess this discipleship in baptism. What a complete and confessed change of mind, what self-judgment; for that is what the word translated "repent" implies. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." They were deeply convicted of sin, they believed, were completely changed in mind, and showed it by being gladly baptized as the disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus, whom they had so lately rejected and murdered. All this was real matter-of-fact, confessed, and seen of all men. They were not ashamed to own Him Lord and Christ. Their sins were forgiven. They were gathered, and by the Holy Spirit added to, and formed the assembly of God. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.... And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house [or at home], did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," or were being saved— that is, from day to day. All were added, but to what? evidently to that which the Holy Spirit was forming, not to different bodies or churches of men, but to the one only Church of God.

It is important to notice the connection there was between repentance and baptism, so the Jews must have understood it. John preached, saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And great multitudes went out to him, "and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matt. 3:1-6). "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for [or unto] the remission of sins." Mark 1:4. Confession of sins was the scripture ground of forgiveness from the days of ancient Job. "He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light" (or, an atonement, margin). We see how this was in the end produced in Job. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. And it was so." When Job was brought to that point, instead of seeking to maintain his own righteousness, he now counted himself vile, completely changed his mind, in dust and ashes. There God met him in unhindered blessing. (Job 33 and 42.)

Was not baptism the outward profession of this entire change of mind? On the day of Pentecost there was a vast multitude of Jobs, so far as seeking to maintain their own religiousness or righteousness. With astonishment they were convicted of the greatest sin a creature is capable of. They had rejected and murdered the Holy and the Just One. See how Peter, or rather the Holy Spirit, pressed this. In chapter 3 he says, "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." And then, after showing them that all this was what God had made known by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, he calls upon them to repent, to entirely change their minds from the mad course they were pursuing; and as many as

believed and did thus change their minds were baptized, and this was evidence or proof of confession of sins. In the preaching then of Peter to the Jews, repentance, baptism, and forgiveness were most intimately connected in the name of Jesus. And they thus became the disciples of the crucified and risen Christ.

And when preaching the gospel to Jews, Mohammedans, or heathen now, these things would be the same. We could not admit the repentance of a Jew to be genuine if he refused to be baptized.

It is somewhat different in an already baptized country. There is little or no connection there between repentance and baptism. Unconverted parents, who never have repented, bring their children to be baptized; but this is confusion. They are in the nominal profession of Christendom, and as such they must be dealt with in preaching. Practically they are much like circumcised Jews. But repentance there must be, and a repentance so deep as to set aside all hopes of improvement in self. Self must be counted vile, abhorred. But then this true repentance is scarcely known. It is most probable, from the subsequent history of Peter himself, that he may not have fully understood the repentance of a Jew, and his baptism unto a DEAD and risen Christ.

The death of Christ was the complete end of Judaism. Christ had been a Jew in the flesh. But now dead and risen, He was a Jew in the flesh no more. Paul shows that we know Him no more as such. But then Judaism was God's trial of man. Just so, but that trial was over in the rejection and murder of Jesus. The whole administration of that system of law, and trial of man, was over, abolished, and in every way a new thing had come in. Yes, so new that it is spoken of as new creation. If we only understood this, we should see how strikingly the figure of baptism shows the end of man, the first man, in the death of Christ.

It was most important to show this first in Jerusalem, the center of Judaism, and to man under law. God in grace bore with the disciples, still clinging to the temple and its service. But now the great High Priest had passed into the heavens, of what value was the temple priesthood? And now the one sacrifice, offered once, in continuance perfected the worshiper, what was the value of all the blood shed in the offerings of the law? Jesus was dead. There was the end of the ages of trial of man. The first man, under the most favorable circumstances at Jerusalem, is set aside forever. A new order has begun—a new creation—that which had been hid in God. The one purpose of His heart was now an accomplished fact.

These were the first days of the Church. What a wonderful description we have of it in Acts 4:31-34: "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."

The First Years of Christianity: Church, Ministry, Doctrine

The Church, Its Ministry, and the Doctrines Taught

We have seen in the Acts that the Church, or assembly of God, as distinct from the Jew and the Gentile, and yet composed of both, began on the day of Pentecost by the descent of the Holy Spirit; and that all through the Acts, all that were converted were added to that one and only Church. Every local assembly, as Jerusalem, Antioch, Thessalonica, etc., formed the one assembly of God. These were gathered out of the world from Judaism or heathenism—they were not of the world, but formed a new company, by the Holy Spirit. And there never had been such a company before. There had been individual believers, as Noah, Abraham, etc. There had been a nation in a certain relation to Jehovah, as Israel. But the Church was not a nation, but all the saved ones out of the nations.

What then is this new company thus formed by the Holy Spirit? In the Romans there is very little said on this; the Church is not its theme, but the righteousness of God is the great subject of that epistle—man before God, and how God is righteous in justifying them that believe. We do however learn this, that “as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom. 12:4-5). And then all gifts, service, and work is in accord with this entirely new position. This “one body” is IN Christ—every member of the one body is in Christ.

Now this could not be, as He tells us, until the grain of wheat had died. Until His death and resurrection He must remain alone (John 12:24). The believer is in Christ who has died and forever put away his sins, and condemned his sin, and is now risen from the dead and ascended on high. The ONE BODY of Christ is in Christ as risen from the dead. We are to minister to one another as members of the glorified Christ in heaven. We are to walk on earth as those who are risen with and now in Christ on high. We shall see more of this ONE BODY in other epistles. What a subject! And yet men can despise and even deride it. Such seem to be given up to judicial blindness.

We are also told that the mystery was kept secret since the world began (Rom. 16:25). And this is a fact, that there is not one word in the Old Testament about this “one body in Christ.” Now that it is revealed in the New Testament scriptures, we may see figures of it in the Old, as Eve was the one wife of Adam. And it would seem that since the first days of the Church until these last days, the mystery of the “one body in Christ” has been almost lost. And many believers even now have no idea what the Church, the one body, is.

Many have a strange thought, that all sects form the one true Church. But are all sects in Christ? Are all the millions of the Greek, Roman, and Protestant sects in Christ, risen from the dead and glorified? Are all these without condemnation, in Christ? No man would venture to say so.

But may there not be some individuals in all sects or divisions of Christendom, in Christ? Surely this may be so.

Then are not those individuals, if in Christ, justified from all things? Do not they form the one body in Christ? They do; that is the very thing I want to show clearer. Thus, if the reader is in Christ, risen from the dead, he is a member of the one body, in Christ. But though he may be a pope, cardinal, archbishop, clergyman, or minister of any so-called church, yet if he is not in Christ risen, he has no more to say to the one body of Christ, or the true Church of God, than a Mohammedan. But if that be so, it is of very little value to belong to any of the so-called churches — Greek, Roman, etc. Just so. The question is this, not are you in the church of Rome, or the church of England, but are you in Christ?

And it does seem to me an important question, Does the Lord approve of my belonging to any division of Christendom? We shall find an answer to that question in 1 Corinthians 1-3. You will notice this epistle is addressed to the true Church of God, and also shows the responsibility of all who profess the name of Christ. And do not forget the test —the only test—in Christ.

“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints [or, saints by calling], with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” 1 Cor. 1:2. The Church of God is composed then of those who are separated from the world, sanctified IN CHRIST JESUS; and all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus are responsible to hear. If then you are not sanctified in Christ Jesus, if you are not holy as in Him by calling, you have no part in the Church of God, the one body, in Christ.

God permitted sectarianism to begin in those first years, so that He might speak His mind by the Holy Spirit on the subject. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions [or schisms] among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.... And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal even as unto babes in Christ.... For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1 Cor. 1:10; 3:1, 3. See the whole context). Thus we may even boast that we do the very thing that God in His Word condemns. Did you never meet a man that boasted that he belonged to the Church of Rome, or of England, or some other division? God says, I beseech you that you do not.

If we really know what the one body of Christ is, and that we are in Christ, in the one body, we really could not belong to any other body, be it Roman, or Protestant. The Lord restore this great truth to our souls more clearly. If the fact of divisions proves even Christians to be in a carnal or natural state, acting as men of the world, and forming schools of philosophy, and, as we have seen, all this is thoroughly disapproved of by the Holy Spirit, then, for the comfort of every believer in Christ, does the same Word of God settle the question—that each and all believers in Christ form the one body of Christ. To put it still a little plainer, as God disapproves of all divisions, they cannot, as supposed, form the true Church, or one body in Christ. Can I then, if I am in the risen Christ, be assured that I am a member of the one only true body of Christ?

Let us hear the answer. “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit ARE WE ALL baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:12 to end). If then you are in Christ risen and glorified, you are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the one body of Christ. This is a stupendous truth,

and if known, error will drop off like autumn leaves.

Let us now pass on to the Epistle to the Ephesians. In chapter 1:1-18 we have the purpose of God; chapter 1:19 to end, and chapter 2, how that purpose has been accomplished. In chapter 3, the administration of that ministry committed to Paul; chapter 4, the Church, the body of Christ; chapter 5, the Church as the bride of Christ.

But mark again how all this is limited to those only in Christ, to the faithful in Christ (chap. 1:1). They are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. They were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world (vs. 4). God predestinated them unto the adoption of children unto Himself. It was His good pleasure, His delight, to have them to Himself. In Christ the Beloved, they are brought into favor. God said, as it were, I will have them in the same favor as My beloved Son. In Him they have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. Yes, this was our God's eternal purpose, and such is every saint in Christ. God accomplished this purpose by raising up His beloved Son from among the dead, and set Him, as Son of man, the new risen Man, at His own right hand in the heavenlies, not now as Messiah on earth, but far above all principality and power. And all this as Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (chap: 1:18-23).

Then is revealed to us the riches of His grace in taking us poor sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, and, in pure love, grace, free favor, giving to us, whether Jews or Gentiles, the very same place as His beloved Son, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." All this is far beyond anything ever made known or promised before. Thus in the Church, all distinction between Jew and Gentile was broken down; peace was made by the blood of the cross, and peace preached to all both far and near. Oh, the depths of His mercy, the riches of His grace!

The assembly—all who are in Christ—are the true saints of God, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Have we been raised from the dead with Christ? If not, we are not stones in this heavenly building. Thus it is nothing to be members of man's churches, but everything to be in Christ.

Now the administration and revelation of this mystery was given to Paul (chap. 3). It was hid from ages, and never made known: "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel."

This did sorely perplex the Jews, and fill them with hatred to Paul. It perplexed them, because every promise in the Old Testament, the Word of God, gave them a distinct place in the time of the kingdom—the coming time of the earth's blessedness. They knew not of this period of mystery while their Messiah is cut off and has nothing.

Every word to them as a nation shall surely be fulfilled, but in its time, not now. It wounded their pride to hear that there was no distinction—that in the boundless grace of God, beyond all thought, Jew and Gentile formed the one new joint body of Christ. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church [assembly] the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our

Lord.” What must the Church be in the sight of God, and in the sight of all angelic hosts! Is there any wonder that Satan should seek to deface it with all the divisions of Christendom?

Now Paul had very fully put before them what it is to be in Christ risen from the dead. Without this no soul is a member of the “one body in Christ.” But there is another thing equally important, and without which we cannot comprehend this wondrous purpose of God. For this he prays.

Our being in Christ is evidently all of God. And it is to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ that Paul prays in Ephesians 1:17. Now he bows his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He longs that we may comprehend the subject before us; therefore he prays unto the Father, knowing the delight that the Father has in Christ and in us. He prays “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory.” The glory given unto His Son, and unto us (see John 17:22). According to this glory, that we might be “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.”

So great is this mystery, this eternal purpose of God as to the Church, that it is not enough to know what Christ has done for us, and what it is to be in Him risen from the dead; we need also to be strengthened with the Spirit, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. We are lost in the infinity of the purpose of God. “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Oh, think of this amazing place of privilege! the risen Man in the glory of God. “And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.”

Colossians 1:18. It pleased the fullness to dwell in Him. “For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:9-10). And we are in Him, and He dwells in our hearts by faith. And all is grounded in love, the love of Christ, unclouded and unchanging, filled with all the fullness of God. Well might the Apostle bend the knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that we might comprehend all this. “Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages”—to the ages of ages.

Such was and is the Church. “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Yes, every believer in Christ, in every land. He may be down in some dark mine, or in some ship far away at sea, on a distant island, or in the center of a continent; he may know it or not, yet it is true. “So we, being many, are one body in Christ.” And just as with the human body, if members of the body joined to the head, we are members one of another. What a strange mistake to suppose that all sects compose this one body. We must see that it is only those who are in Christ. And mark, Christ is in heaven; the Church, then, His body, is not an earthly society, but joined to Him in heaven, though as to our persons, we are on earth. A heavenly people on earth, but our politics are in heaven; and we are waiting for Him to come and take us there. Paul was a prisoner of the Lord for this very truth; had he circumcised the heathen who believed, and thus incorporated them with the national system of Israel, the offense of the cross would have ceased.

But according to the eternal purpose of God, the Church is separated from every worldly thing unto Himself. It is one, and its absolute unity excludes every imitation or competition. Is it a light matter

to be treated with indifference? Paul says, “I...beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.” Mark, it is not a question of mere agreement in opinion, but the entire state of soul—lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance. Lord, give us more of this. It is not a human organization, but “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” How important then to be quite sure that the unity we are seeking to keep is the unity of the Spirit. How am I to know this? What are the marks, the facts? These are the facts, the marks, the circles of unity:

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4). One body excludes the idea of many Christian bodies, just as one Spirit excludes the idea of many Holy Spirits. The idea is repugnant in either case to Scripture. There is one body; we have not to make it; it is formed; it exists. How this has been forgotten! This one body is the first circle. “One body in Christ,” as we have seen.

Then, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” “One Lord” excludes the many lords of the heathen. “One faith” excludes all schools of mere human thought. “One baptism” excludes the many baptisms of the law. The believer professed discipleship to the one Lord by one baptism.

“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” The unity of the Godhead excludes all idolatry. One Father excludes all so-called holy fathers, and what need of them? How Satan has sought, by the help of men, to deface and to deny the unity during the dark ages of departure from the truth as held in the first years of the Church. But does not the truth remain the same? Do not the facts remain the same? We must remember that these three circles of unity refer to the true Church of God as seen in the beginning.

Can the eternal purpose of God fail or change, as to the Church? Can the love of Christ cease to His Church? “Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27). If you are in Christ, all this is certain to you as a member of His body, the Church. Is it not most blessed? Though all unworthy in yourself, yet in Christ you are the object of the Father's love, even as Christ—the unchanging object also of the love of Christ.

Just think, you are part of Himself, member of His body, the Church, for which He gave Himself to die, ever applying the water of the word. He says, “I come quickly.” As Eve was presented to Adam, the figure of Him that was to come, so surely shall the Church, the heavenly Eve, be presented to Christ.

We will now inquire a little more fully as to what was the Christian ministry in the first years of the Church. We know how men are educated and ordained by men now for the various churches of men. Was it so in the beginning? Assuredly not, for there were no such churches then. There was the one body of Christ, the Church. And we may now look at Ephesians 4, as to the ministry Christ gave for HIS Church. Verse 8 is a quotation from Psalm 68:18. And this is the ascension of Christ as man, victorious over the enemy. Hence, in the psalm it is, “Thou hast received gifts in the man” (margin). That is, Christ has received gifts as man, having accomplished redemption and ascended up on high, so that true Christian ministry dates from the ascension of Christ. That poor rebellious sinners can thus be used of Christ, is a proof of the complete efficacy of His redemption

work. As man on this earth, He descended into death and the grave for us; and now, as ascended in victory over Satan and sin and death, He gave gifts in men.

Individuals are His gifts. "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." These are not the sign-gifts of the Holy Spirit, but permanent gifts for the growth and edification of the body, the Church. The apostles and prophets remain in their inspired writings, and, revelation being completed, we need no more.

There are two distinct gifts which remain and are needed: the evangelist for the conversion of sinners, and adding to the building; and the pastor and teacher, which would mostly be the same gift, for building up, feeding, and nurturing the body of Christ as here below. These are the abiding gifts of Christ, but not for any denomination or national organization, but "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And not only this ministry, but that ministry was so exercised that we "speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Such then was ministry in the beginning. If a man was a gift from the ascended Christ, he was a gift for the body of Christ wherever he was. This did not hinder, but help, and give opportunity for the manifestation of the Spirit to be given to every man in the assembly used by Him. "Dividing to every man severally as He will." (Read 1 Cor. 12.) The Spirit does not now work by the gifts of healing and miracles, which were for signs and witness in the beginning; but all that is needed for the increase and edifying of the body of Christ remains. We have seen the specimen of Church order and ministry in Acts 13. Let us then remember that the same Holy Spirit still remains to the end. He is as really present now as then, but we do not own Him—imperceptibly man takes His place, and some Christians are not ashamed to elect a president to take the very place of the Lord and of the Holy Spirit. Who can conceive the loss this is to modern Christendom. Some are so ignorant of His real presence on earth, that they pray for Him to come; others regard Him only as an influence. But how few own Him as acting here for the Lord, who is as truly present and acting by the Spirit, as if we saw Him?

It may be asked, But if confusion comes in, and many are found to speak to no profit, must we not have order, and appoint a minister over the local assembly, so as to avoid confusion? Is not all this fully anticipated? What will not man abuse? Very early in the first years, this very confusion did actually come in at Corinth. Did the Holy Spirit appoint a minister over that assembly to correct the confusion? Never. No, the same order that we see in Acts 13:1-4 is directed to be carried out: "Let the prophets [such as speak to edification] speak two or three, and let the other judge....For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted" (1 Cor. 14:29-31). And Paul regards these things which he thus writes, as "the commandments of the Lord." Now if this was the order of ministry and worship alone pleasing to the Lord, the very order He set up by the Holy Spirit in the first years, has He ever altered His mind for the Church?

We must admit that episcopacy, or a man-elected minister over an assembly, is the very opposite of the order of ministry here described in the beginning. Then when afterward did Christ set up that episcopacy, or one-man ministry? Can a single text be found for it in the New Testament? Is it not

a great mistake? Is there any wonder then that much of what men call the Christian ministry is leading the Church to idolatry and infidelity? Can that be Christian ministry which is not of Christ? The Lord lead us back to His Word!

The First Years of Christianity: Doctrines and Righteousness

“God is love.” But the question was, How could God deal with a creature like man, whose very nature was hatred and rebellion against the blessed God, who loved him even in his enmity? The law had been given to Israel for fifteen hundred years, God's righteous rule for man — a law which brought out man's rebellious nature in open transgression. The rest of the world had been given up to their own will and lusts, they having given up God and His truth as set forth in His eternal power and Godhead (Rom. 1.)

The Gentile world had sunk to the lowest degradation, worshiping demons, and being led by them into every form of gross wickedness. Yet “God is love.” Israel, on the other hand, was no better. With every privilege, having the oracles of God, yet they did not keep the law; and, what was far worse, so blind were they that they were seeking to attain to righteousness by that very law which God had given to manifest man's sin in open transgression.

All this may be read as the distinct teaching of the Spirit of God in Romans and Galatians. Yet “God is love.” However bad man may be, and he cannot be worse than he has proved himself to be in murdering the Son of God, yet “God is love.” But then God is also a holy God; and “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18).

You ask, Is this a proved fact? Surely we need no greater proof than the Word of God—Thus it is written. The wrath of God is a fact—wrath against sin. Let us look at one fact in proof of this—the penalty of breaking the first command to man: “For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” or “dying thou shalt die.” At the moment you read this, there are thousands of the children of Adam within one hour of death. By sin came death, as it is written, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (Rom. 5:12). Yes, every day of this dying death — every twenty-four hours — many thousands of the family of that man by whom sin entered, pass away in death, and many in great agony. Have you ever read of an infidel who escaped the doom of sin? Now if such a visible stream, such a terrible river of death and anguish flows from sin, and all along its course such suffering and pain, and anguish of mind and body, poverty, sickness, guilt, and wickedness, flowing from sin, even in this world, what may you and I expect if God deals with us in righteous wrath through all the ages of eternity? Can we count the number of our sins? Ah, well He may say, who bore them in His body on the tree, “They are more than the hairs of My head.”

And the doctrine of the First Years of Christianity was this, that all were guilty, Jews and Gentiles—not a single exception. “There is none righteous, no not one.” Every mouth stopped; all the world guilty before God (Rom. 3:9-20). And still you say, “God is love.” Yes, and God from all eternity, from before the foundation of the world, has chosen a people that shall be holy and without blame before Him in love. Now tell me, reader, how do you expect to attain to that happiness? just tell me, how do you, a guilty sinner, hope to be able to stand before God, justified from all things, accounted righteous? Perhaps you say, “By attending a place of worship; there I

am taught the law of God; indeed, it is hung up for my eyes to see it. There I am taught to keep that law. And I hope to so keep it, with the help of God, that I may at last attain to righteousness, so as to be able to enter heaven at last. Is not this the right way to heaven?" Millions expect the same as you do. It is this very way that led the Jews to reject the righteousness of God. Being ignorant of that, they went about, just as now, to establish their own righteousness. See Rom. 9:31 and 10:4.

Ah, those verses are dead against the fashionable religion of the whole world.

But the doctrine of the First Years of Christianity was the very opposite of all this. It was plainly this: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified IN HIS SIGHT: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). Have you not found it so? How old are you—forty? And if sincere you have been trying to keep the law over thirty years; are you fit for heaven? Are you righteous in His sight? Are you awake? Is your conscience awake, or hardened? Look back! Look at the present—this day! Remember, God tells you, if you break one commandment you are guilty of all. You have longed to be holy, pure, sinless; but sins, sins, sins. Have you ever been overwhelmed, not able to look up? But you say, "I am eighty years of age." Worse still, eighty years of sins, instead of forty. Ah, they stare upon you now every day of your life. Not a single day have you loved God with your whole heart. And with eternity before you, and all your efforts miserable failures, is it not enough to make you gasp? The most righteous thing you and I can do is to judge ourselves guilty before God. On the ground of any righteousness of our own we are lost. Past, present, or future, we have no hope of attaining to righteousness by works of law. We are undone.

Now for our question: with the wrath of God against sin before us, as we have seen, in Adam's transgression and our own sins—with the absolute certainty that sin must be punished, as that stream of agony and death even in this world fully proves—how is God to be righteous in taking such ungodly sinners as we are, and declaring us justified from all things? How is His eternal love and infinite abhorrence of sin to be revealed in perfect, consistent harmony?

What is the righteousness of God as revealed in the First Years of Christianity? Oh, the importance of having again the gospel as then preached: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed" (Rom. 1:17 and context).

This is fully explained in Romans 3:21-26. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifest, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Mark, this is God's righteousness, apart from law, though surely witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ. We thus look by faith away from ourselves, and law, and everything else, to Jesus Christ. And what we find there, is unto all and upon all them that believe. Let us fully own that all have sinned—you, I, all—and come short of the glory of God. God points us then to Jesus Christ as the revelation of His own righteousness, and to the work of propitiation which He has wrought. God

declares His righteousness, both for the remission of the sins of Old Testament believers, and also His, God's righteousness in justifying now "him which believeth in Jesus." This is a vital question for us. And mark it well, this is entirely of God. "Being justified freely by His grace." This is the free favor of God. By what means is God righteous in doing this, accounting the believer righteous before Him freely? The answer is very simple—"through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

But you say, "Sin must be punished." We have seen this verified, as to God's government in this world, by the black river of death, and in the judgment that is to follow; but how has God dealt with all believers' sins and iniquities? If they must be judged according to all that God is, has that been done? This is exactly how God has both commended His love to us, and revealed His inflexible righteousness. Yes, God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son for this very purpose. And we believe God, "that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses." Oh, behold, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, once delivered for our offenses. Ah, He only knew what it was to be delivered to bear that wrath of God due to sin, as God sees it; to endure the punishment according to God's holiness and abhorrence of sin. Such was God's love to us, that it pleased Him to bruise His Son in our stead. Yes, He who said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will," sank beneath the dark billows of the wrath of God. Such was the price of our eternal redemption. And did God in righteousness accept the ransom price? This is the very thing we believe, that God raised Him from the dead "for our justification," in view of our justification, for that very purpose. So that God is our righteous justifier. Who shall condemn?

O reader, reject this redemption, and you must suffer in your own person the just wrath of God against your sins, throughout an unending eternity. But now, thus believing God, we are accounted righteous before Him, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. Thus God has acted in perfect consistency with Himself and toward all created beings. The sins of the believer have been borne, and sin judged on the infinite Person of the Son of God, according to the eternal purpose of God—according to all that God is in His holiness, majesty, and love.

It was this great truth—the righteousness of God revealed, displayed by the atoning death of the Son of God, proved by His resurrection and ascension to heaven, borne witness to by the descent of the Holy Spirit—that gave absolute peace with God, in the First Years of Christianity. And, however men and demons have sought to deface it, yet it remains the same—the only safe foundation for the sinner's soul to rest upon. There is no other foundation on which my soul can rest. God has settled every question for me in absolute righteousness, so that now we can say with certainty, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

God is thus revealed to us. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." There is nothing on our part but sins—no work of our own in this matter—all is free grace. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth [reckoneth] righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute [reckon] sin" (Rom. 4:4-8).

Do you know God thus as your Justifier? Are you this blessed man? Not of, or by any works of your own, but freely by His free favor, through the redemption you have in Christ Jesus. Now if we see the kindness of God in making all this so plain to us, and His own righteousness in justifying us, all fear and doubt will be gone, and we shall do as they did in the First Years of Christianity, as Paul says, "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [reconciliation]." May it be so with the reader.

The First Years of Christianity: Effects of Gospel

We have dwelt on the facts of the gospel in Acts 17, so very contrary to all human plans and theology. As Paul opened the Scriptures, it was not to show what man must do, as in the law of old, but what Christ must needs do: that Christ must needs suffer, and rise again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom he preached is Christ. Let us now see what was the effect of this singular preaching. Did you ever hear preaching of this kind—not a word about what you must do, but all about what Jesus has done?

Let us go back to those early years when Paul, fresh from the heavenly vision, having seen the glorified Jesus, who must, and had died for his sins according to the Scriptures. No doubt the certainty in his own soul carried great weight with it. He was sure he had the authority of God.

Three poor men arrive in the rich, populous, wicked heathen city of Thessalonica. They had been treated as dangerous vagabonds at another city, and were sore with stripes; and so poor and friendless they seem, that they have to labor night and day to get bread.

They had no authority from man or from the Roman state. They were the disciples of a Man who had been executed in the most degraded and cruel manner. There was a Jews' meeting room, or synagogue, in that city in those days, in which the law of God was read. There was often speaking in that synagogue, but always teaching what man was to do to attain to righteousness; not one speaker or hearer had ever been known to attain to righteousness before God.

For three sabbath days these poor men went into that synagogue. Never had such preaching been heard in that city before. It was a strange contrast to all that had ever been heard there. It was not what they must do, as we have seen, not one word of the kind; yet it was just the thing needed. Many felt they needed salvation first, and fruits would follow. All that is said, however, is that they believed the preaching, and consorted with Paul and Silas a great multitude. These poor men soon had to flee for their lives, as usual, from the cruel hatred of the Jews, who could not endure such doctrine. They would rather seek after righteousness by their own works.

God ordered that an inspired letter was sent by these poor men to all these believers, as soon as they had heard from them. And as this is just a sample of the effect of the preaching of Paul, and others with him, in the First Years of Christianity, it is a great privilege to have such an inspired letter, showing the immediate effects of the true gospel in those days. This assembly at Thessalonica does not seem to have had any further human help until Timothy was sent to see how they did (1 Thess. 3:2).

So all that we read of are the effects of a few weeks' preaching in a heathen city, given up to demon worship. We shall also find in this letter a good outline of the teaching of the Apostle to such as are saved.

The first thing that strikes one is, that all these believers are at once brought into the position of the assembly in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. This assembly was gathered out from

Jews and Gentiles by these few weeks' preaching. This, as we see elsewhere, was the work of the Holy Spirit. There are no jarring sects or parties, but the one assembly in that city, and in such a blessed relationship in the Father and in Jesus Christ. And their condition was such that Paul could give thanks to God always for them all, making mention of them in his prayers.

And what was the effect of this singular preaching as to good works? He says, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." It must be right seed that produced such fruit as this. There could be no uncertainty as to their election of God. For the gospel he preached, so different from anything ever heard before, was not "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." Now this is never the case where a mixture of law and grace is preached, but it is always a vague hope, and all is uncertainty. No such uncertainty accompanied the true gospel in those first years. The full assurance of salvation in the power of the Holy Spirit always leads the happy believer to long to make it known to others.

And mark another effect. These poor heathen were turned to God, from idols, "to serve the living and true God." Was not this wonderful? Did not God set His seal to His gospel in this marvelous result?

But were there no worldly advantages held out to these first Christians? Not a single earthly advantage, but the very opposite. It was "to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." They, as everywhere, received the word in much affliction and persecution, and with only one hope before them, the return of the Lord Jesus, the coming of the Lord. Paul himself had no other hope, as he says, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"

Oh, those first years! how different from these last days! One marked difference was this: "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," etc. Is it not generally the opposite of this now? Doctrines are believed, because certain men teach them. What should we think of a child, if a father sent him a letter, and he said, I will believe it if the servants say it is so?

Let it not be supposed from the gospel preached—of salvation entirely through what Christ had done — that when these hearers were born again, were saved, were justified forever from all things, that they were not then taught to walk as children of God. No, Paul says, "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father does his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory." As he says elsewhere, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8). The order is this: first, the grace of God bringeth salvation to all men; second, this teaches us to lead a holy life; third, to look for the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord. (See Titus 2:11-13.) How simple this was in the first years!

Such was the order, and such was the effect in Thessalonica. First, the free sovereign favor of God, bringing salvation—all accomplished by Christ—not a word of doing or law-keeping. Second,

they were, when saved, exhorted to walk worthy of God, who had called them unto His kingdom and glory. Third, they were separated to God, to wait for Jesus from heaven. And the power of the truth was so great that it spread in all directions.

The more we study this epistle to these young converts from Jews and Gentiles, the more wonderful we see the effects of the gospel Paul preached. Just a few weeks' preaching, and a multitude of believers was the result, and every one of them in holy separation to Christ. Is there any town or city now on this earth that answers to this? With all the vast machinery and privileges of these last days, can we find even a village where ALL the believers are separated, gathered to Christ, with no sect or party in it, but all under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all enjoying the full assurance of faith, all waiting for Jesus from heaven? Where shall we look for the Christianity of these first years? How many cities may be found where there is not one believer really separated to the name and person of Christ, and not one really waiting for Him from heaven, where it would be difficult to find anything that really answers to the first years? We must own the truth of this.

The Holy Spirit has not left on record the manner or order of their meetings for worship or teaching. We may, however, learn from Acts 17, that soon after their conversion, Paul and his companions had to escape by night (vs. 10). Neither did they seem to have had the least help from any other servants of the risen Christ, except the visit of Timothy (1 Thess. 3:1-2). Yet there were those among themselves "which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." And they were to esteem them very highly. And they were enabled to edify one another (chap. 5:11-14). We shall find this in keeping with other epistles we may shortly notice.

Thus, though we have not an exact description of a meeting for worship and edification, yet they had both, without the arrangements of modern Christendom. And it would be a most important inquiry to examine the Acts and the epistles, to see what we can learn as to the way in which the assemblies came together in the First Years of Christianity. Have you ever done this, beloved reader? We are so liable to take for granted that what each of us has been brought up in, is the right and scriptural thing, without ever comparing it with the Word of God. At present our inquiry is more connected with the effect of a full unconditional gospel such as Paul the Apostle preached. We have seen the effect to be marvelous.

The First Years of Christianity: Facts and Fruits of Paul

What did Paul preach? What produced such marvelous results? Did he preach what man must do? Or did he preach what Christ had done? Did he preach baptism as a means of regeneration, or of salvation? No; baptism had no place in the gospel he preached (1 Cor. 1:17). Did he preach that all men were under the law, and that they must be justified by either keeping the law, or by someone keeping it for them, any way that they must be justified on the principle of the law? No; we do not find such a thought.

Let us keep close to the facts—his preaching as commissioned from the heavenly vision, by the Lord Himself, and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in his epistles. You will notice in his manner of preaching that there was not one word of what man was required to do. Men were treated as lost, and Paul had a message from God for them: “Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.” Not a word about all men being under the law, and that Christ must needs keep it for them. The very Jews of the synagogue, who were seeking to be justified by keeping the law, needed an entire change of mind, repentance, and the facts that Paul preached produced that repentance. The mass of them rejected this gospel and these facts with scorn, just as those now who say they are Jews, that is, under law, and are not, will reject these facts of the gospel which were told out in the First Years of Christianity.

Study these three facts:

- 1) “Christ must needs have suffered”;
- 2) “And risen again from the dead”;
- 3) “That this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.”

These three facts formed the base or foundation of all Paul's preaching. And they were not hearsay facts; he had not been taught them by others. But he had seen this very crucified Jesus in that heavenly vision of glory above all created light.

It is no little privilege to have the true gospel thus direct from the man who received it in the heavenly vision—a man who could not be mistaken. In 1 Corinthians 15 he gives an account of the gospel he preached to them. It is as ever the same, “How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” And that others as well as himself had seen Him after His resurrection, “So we preach, and so ye believed.” If Christ was not risen, then he was a false witness, and they had believed in vain, and were still in their sins.

These were not doctrines, properly speaking, or much less theories, but simple facts. All else in the world were doctrines and theories of men. Here were facts that really revealed the righteous character of God, that met all God's claims on the guilty sinner, and gave him the absolute assurance that all was met and settled to the glory of God; for the full glory of God shone in the

face of His beloved Son, the Man who had done it all, and who declared in the plainest terms that all who believed God were reckoned righteous before Him. All this was clearer and brighter than the Eastern noonday sun.

Now, is not this just what man needs to know with certainty, so that he may have perfect peace with God, in the full radiance of His glory? Perhaps nothing has more tended to hide this clear gospel of the First Years of Christianity than the Galatian heresy, the determination to put all men under law. Not the openly giving up of Christ, but making our justification to depend partly on Christ, and partly on law. Even Peter utterly failed in this matter, and the beloved Barnabas was carried away with the dissimulation.

The Spirit of God, by the Apostle Paul, takes this ground, that since Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father," then to mix up the law, that is, the principle of what we ought to do to God, would be quite a different gospel from the gospel given to him (Gal. 1:4-12).

And Paul shows the real folly of this, for the Jews who were under the law had to give it up, "that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." To do it would be to build again the things which he had destroyed. As to himself, as a responsible man once under the law, he was dead, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ." Now a dead crucified man is not under law, but is dead to it. He says, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

No, nothing could be more sad or foolish than the giving up the truth as held by Paul, and set forth in this epistle. It has leavened all Christendom, and brought in the utmost confusion. Sometimes the soul believes God, and then is happy; then seeks to attain to a little more righteousness by the law as a rule of life! and then is almost in despair. Where is there one who has not suffered by this confusion? Are you perplexed, and say, "Why, I have been taught from my childhood that all men, Jews or Gentiles, were under the law, and all had transgressed it, and all were under its curse, and that even the believer is put under it again, as the rule of life"? Yes, this is exactly what men teach now. Is it what Paul taught in the First Years of Christianity?

As this letter to the Galatians was one of the very first of the first years, do prayerfully read on. What do you find in chapter 3? He tells us that Abraham was justified long before the law was given. He believed God, and IT (faith) was reckoned to him for righteousness. He tells us, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Then if all are now of the works of the law, all are still under the curse. He tells us that the law is not of faith. Speaking of Jews, who had been under it, he says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

He tells us that the covenant confirmed of God in Christ, which He promised to Abraham, was 430 years before the Law. He explains why the law was given. It served to bring out transgressions; it was a schoolmaster until Christ.

In chapter 4, there is the most marked distinction between those under law, and those under grace—the one in bondage, the other in the liberty of sons. And under the allegory of Hagar and Sarah, or Ishmael and Isaac, the two principles of Law and grace cannot go on together. Ishmael must be cast out. Oh, how we, like Abraham, plead that he might live. How we struggle that the flesh under law might live, when God tells us to reckon it dead. It seems so desirable that there might be some good found in us, and the work of Christ to make up the deficiency. To take this ground is to be in bondage. Ah, you know this, though you thus cleave to and Plead for Ishmael. Oh, that my old “I” could live and be better. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Read every word that follows in chapter 5. Remember, if you take the ground of the law, “Christ shall profit you nothing.”

What solemn warnings follow, and how little heeded. The only power for a holy walk, and we need no other power, is this, the power of the Holy Spirit. And notice this mark: “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” Then also you find the great truth, that neither the law, circumcision, nor lawlessness, uncircumcision, availeth anything, but a new creature. A truth of the utmost importance! Man must be born wholly anew. The law only brings out the sin in his nature in open transgression. This is most fully brought out in the larger letter on this subject, the Epistle to the Romans. Oh, that we could go back to the first years, and read that epistle as the very words of God. All are proved guilty—both the Gentiles, which have not the law, and the Jews, which had the law. For until the law, that is, until the time that it was given, from Adam to Moses, sin was in the world, though not reckoned as transgression.

And there is no thought in that epistle of man being justified on the principle of law. This was impossible, since man was guilty. Why should we seek to be wiser than God? He deals with the facts of man's condition. The fact was, the Gentiles without law were guilty of the grossest sins, and the Jews under the law were no better. So that the glad tidings could not be in any way what man was to God, for he was only guilty and under judgment, and had no strength to be better. God could not be righteous then in justifying the guilty on the principle of law.

Then shone out the righteousness of God in justifying the sinner, entirely apart from law, exactly as Paul had received the gospel of the heavenly vision. Jesus must suffer the atoning death of the cross. He must die for our sins. He must be delivered for our offenses, whether Jews or Gentiles. He must rise again—yes, God raised Him again for our justification. Now what had the law to do with this, or to say to this, except in the types of the sacrifices? You will thus see that both the righteousness of God in justifying, and our eternal salvation, rest not on what we must do, or law, but solely on what Jesus must do, and what He has done—done once for all, never to be repeated.

For God, who raised Him from the dead, had been glorified by His death and suffering wrath for our sins. So that God could in perfect righteousness raise Him from the dead, for the express purpose of our justification. And as the work of Christ can never lose its value for us, we see the everlasting proof of this—Jesus in glory. The very Jesus who took the entire responsibility of our guilt and sins, is without spot in the presence of God for us. So that we are in the perfect righteousness of God, justified from all things, and forever. And forever we have peace with God. Jesus must suffer, and rise again. Jesus has suffered and risen again. This being the case, the effect of believing God in all this must be immediate forgiveness, and justification from all things.

Such always was the case in the First Years of Christianity. And why not now? Repeat this verse until God gives you rest in the certainty of His Word: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The First Years of Christianity: First State of the Church

We have seen the formation of the Church, or, assembly; its united prayer; the place shaken where they were assembled; and all filled with the Holy Spirit. The Word of God was spoken with boldness. All that believed were of one heart and soul; the apostles with great power gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon all. Such was the assembly in the beginning. Alas, what a contrast now!

And yet the true heavenly character of the new assembly was not then fully, if at all, revealed. The man who was the chosen vessel to make known the Church, was not even yet converted from Judaism. This man, Saul of Tarsus, was a mad persecutor of the disciples, the great enemy of Christ. As he was on his way to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, brighter than the noonday sun. The mad persecutor fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Amazed at these words, he said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." What a revelation, and what a revolution in this man!

The Jesus he persecuted was the Lord of glory. But most wonderful—this Lord of glory owned every disciple, every true believer, as part of Himself. What was done to them, was done to Him. This contained the mystery—the stupendous fact—that every believer now on earth was one with the Lord of glory. Many years after this we find it written, "As He is so are we." How little had Saul thought that what he did to the feeblest disciple, he did to Jehovah Jesus, Lord and Christ. What a repentance, what a change of mind! Trembling and astonished, he said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" He was directed to Ananias, a devoted disciple in the city. Ananias was greatly afraid of this terrible persecutor. The Lord calmed his fears, and said to him, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."

Such was the effect on Saul of this revelation, that for three days he was blind and could neither eat nor drink. His eyes were then opened, and he at once proved the reality of his repentance, or change of mind, by being baptized, and took his place with the disciples as those whose sins were washed away. The full account of his commission to preach and teach in the name of the Lord Jesus we find in Acts 26:12-23.

It must be observed that, as the sample minister of Christ, he received his commission and authority to preach direct from Christ Himself—not from man, not from the Church. He takes great pains, in Galatians 1, to prove that this was from God. Never did he go to Jerusalem, to the apostles even, to receive authority to preach. He was only recognized by them. "When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision" (Gal. 2:9).

It may justly be asked, if the apostles or the Church never assumed to give authority to preach the gospel, or teach, in the first years of Christianity, how is it that those who profess to be the successors of the apostles do so now? That is a question for them to answer. They will tell you, they have derived that power and authority to appoint and ordain those who alone shall be set apart to preach the gospel, and administer the sacraments. And yet in the beginning there was no such power or authority in the hands of these very apostles. If there was, let it be shown. Paul was most jealous to disown all such authority.

The subject of the Christian ministry is a deeply interesting one. Does that which assumes to be that ministry now, correspond with what it was in the beginning, or is it a totally different thing? Men are now ordained or authorized by men to preach and teach. But we must honestly own that there is nothing in the New Testament account that corresponds to this. There was the one Church of God, or assembly of God; and all Christians formed that one assembly. There was the church of God at Rome, but there was no church of Rome at any place but Rome. There was no distinction between the assembly in Greece, and in Italy, or Syria. There were no denominations. if you had spoken of the church of Rome, or church of England in Scotland, or in Ireland, not a man on earth would have understood you. Then, if there were no denominations or national churches of the world, there could be no ministers of such churches. Now since this is assuredly, manifestly, the case, it follows that people may be members of such human churches, and not be members of the one body of Christ at all. Quite true, you will say, no doubt millions are so at this day. Then does it not equally follow that men may be ministers of such churches, and not even be Christians, and not ministers of Christ—in a word, that the Christian ministry, and the vast denominational ministry, are two very distinct things? There is one thing perhaps above all others that marks this distinction.

The true Christian ministry owned and had the guidance of the Holy Spirit where to minister. The ministry which is of man, is solely appointed by man, and scarcely dares truly to recognize the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let us turn to the Word. We will first take Peter. Christ appointed him (John 21:15-17) and gave him the special ministry to open the door of the kingdom to Jews and Gentiles (Matt. 16:19). As to any other appointment from men, he had none. Human education, none. He was an unlettered man (Acts 4:13). Could the Holy Spirit come down from heaven and use such a man? What a question! Let the preaching in the mighty power of the Holy Spirit answer (Acts 2; 3), and how distinctly he had the guidance of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 10).

Then let us take the ministry of Paul. Sometimes Acts 13:1-4 is quoted as authority for ordaining a man to be the minister, preacher, and pastor. This scripture is doubtless a most important one as to ministry in every way. It gives us the most distinct view of true Christian ministry that we could have. Here is the assembly as seen in the first years of Christianity: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen,...and Saul." Mark, all these were prophets and teachers. They were the chosen gifts of the ascended Lord. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Let us then take Saul. We read at his conversion that he "was...certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." This gave great amazement to all, but his authority to preach and the power were alike from Christ alone. Then Barnabas took him to Jerusalem, and told the apostles how he

had preached at Damascus. "And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians," etc. He is then sent to Tarsus (Acts 9:18-30).

Then again in the formation of the Church from the Gentiles at Antioch, Barnabas went to Tarsus and brought Saul: "And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people" (Acts 11:21-26). Indeed, this scene at Antioch (chap. 13) is after the collection had been sent by the hands of Barnabas and Saul, and after their return. "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry," or charge (chaps. 11:30; 12:25). So that there is no sense whatever in quoting chapter 13 as authority for doing the very opposite of what the Spirit did here.

Now look at the assembly gathered together at Antioch. There is no man as the minister of that assembly, but the prophets and teachers. They minister to the Lord. Where is this the case now? Is there no president? Yes, the Lord by the Holy Spirit. And where He is, there need be no other chairman or president. They so own the presence of the Holy Spirit that they have His very guidance as to the persons He appoints for a special mission. Here is the secret of the power of the first years of the Church. And there is only power now, in proportion as we truly own the Holy Spirit. He is the power.

In all the great gatherings of Christians, can you tell me of one that answers to this assembly at Antioch? Is not the Holy Spirit as truly here now as then? Assuredly, but men put a man in his place, and then pray for the Holy Spirit to come!

Is it not incredible that there should be such darkness as to quote this scripture, when men appoint a man to be the minister over a church? The Holy Spirit did not say, Separate Me one of these teachers for this special work, but He sends two; and we see this principle throughout. And in the preachings, it is Paul and Barnabas speaking boldly, though Paul was the chief speaker (chaps. 13:43-46; 14:12; 15:35). "Preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also."

And after the separation of Paul and Barnabas, it is the same with other companions, Silas and Timotheus (chap. 16). And how the Holy Spirit guided their steps as to where to preach. For the time they were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia; but they were guided to Europe, and from place to place (chap. 16:6-9; etc.). How distinctly also the Spirit guided Philip to join himself to the eunuch, sitting in his chariot. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him." (See Acts 8:26-40.) But we look in vain for a single instance of human ordination of a minister over a church to preach or to teach. It is said of Apollos, when he began to preach the gospel, "When he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace" (Acts 18:27). Surely this is an important scripture for our guidance now.

But if such was the Christian ministry in the first years of the Church, as seen in the Acts, and fully borne out in the epistles, where is that same true Christian ministry now? It is quite true that each of the various divisions of modern Christendom has its ministry. But what have all these in common with the ministry of Christ, or Christian ministry, as seen in the Word of God? It is high time to search the Scriptures to see what is of God, and what is of man. The apostolic appointment

of elders and deacons was quite another thing. These might, or might not, be the gifts of Christ to teach or preach. The elders were appointed to care for and guide the assembly in spiritual matters, and the deacons to care for the poor in temporal things. The apostles could also delegate a Timothy or a Titus, but very few would assume that we have apostles now. Let us then, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, turn to His inspired epistles, and inquire what was the Church, what its ministry, and what the doctrines taught in the first years of Christianity.

The First Years of Christianity: Four Gospels

We have already dwelt a little on the incarnation, baptism, and temptation of Jesus the Son of God. What then is the character and teaching of the four gospels? And what is not the scope of their teaching? Four persons are used by the Holy Spirit to relate the life, words, and miracles of the incarnate Holy One. These four gospels do not present Christianity fully, but the Person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord, the foundation of Christianity. It is important to see this. Take the ministry of John the Baptist. He is the forerunner of the Messiah, and yet points Him out as the Lamb of God; and as the Lamb of God, He is the foundation of all blessing. But mark, John does not say one word about the Church (the assembly of God). He came as a Jewish prophet, preaching only to the Jews, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. But not because the assembly was at hand; that great truth was not revealed to John, but for “The kingdom of God is at hand.”

The kingdom of heaven, the reign of Messiah, was the burden of the Old Testament prophecies; but they never once named the Church. That mystery was hid from them, and hid from John. No doubt repentance was requisite, equally for the foretold kingdom (Ezek. 36), and also, as we shall see, for the forming of the Church (Acts 2). But what was the teaching or preaching of Christ? Most profitable would it be to study the four gospels in their distinctive character. But this would fill a volume. Whether as the righteous Jew in Matthew, or the Servant in Mark, or as the Son of man in Luke, and, still more wondrous, as Son of God in John— perfect in each, perfect in the whole. If you will examine each, you will find in the first three, Jesus preaches the coming kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God. He does twice name the Church, or assembly, but only as a future thing— “I will build My church” (Matt. 16:18).

In the Word of God everything is found in its place and time. The presence and teaching of Jesus on this earth, is the last trial of man. God who had sent His prophets, had now sent His Son—God manifest in flesh. He came to His own people, the Jews, and His own received Him not. To them there was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. He was truly God, yet perfect man; absolutely perfect in every relation, whether to man or to God. John says, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Oh, how wondrous to have in these gospels the invisible God revealed. Surely every word demands our study with profound reverence. We cannot conceive the profit and deep untold joy we should have in becoming more thoroughly acquainted with each gospel in its own peculiar character.

All is pure grace, yet there is truth in every line. Man's true condition is set forth in each gospel. The presence of Jesus among men is like the rising of the sun on a dark world. Take just a little sample of man's need and condition as illustrated in Mark 1 and 2. Jesus enters a meeting room of religious men, the synagogue of the Jews, at Capernaum. What does His presence reveal? Man under the power of an unclean spirit! The demon is in the synagogue. But here is One with power to deliver, and all that were brought to Him were healed. “And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.”

Then there came a poor leper to Him, the very picture of sin in the flesh. Does He spurn him? No, with tender compassion He heals him. Then a helpless man, sick of the palsy, was let down to His feet. He saw their faith; and they heard strange words from the lips of a man, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." To scribes this was blasphemy. Yes, that which man needs first, above all things, the forgiveness of sins, was blasphemy to them! But He who forgave sins had power to say, "Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk." Whether man knows it or not, these miracles truthfully set forth man's real condition. He is under the power of demons, and cannot free himself; he is full of leprosy, of sin, and cannot heal himself; he is utterly without power to walk in the holy commandments of God; he needs forgiveness and power to walk, and there is only One who can meet his manifold need; and that One is Jesus. Has He met yours? None other can.

Take one other parable, Luke 15. Man is lost. The blessed shepherd seeks the lost until he finds, and takes the lost sheep safely home. Then the lost piece of silver is sought until it is found. This gives joy. Then the lost son comes to himself, and repents in the confession of sin. But oh! the joy of the father! His great delight to receive, forgive, clothe, bring into his own presence! The work of the Son in redemption, the work of the Holy Spirit in seeking the redeemed, the unspeakable joy of God the Father in receiving the redeemed sinner—what a revelation of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

We might dwell forever on the life, teaching, and miracles of the Lord Jesus as a Jew in the midst of His Jewish disciples. But the time drew near when the passover must be killed. He set His face for the last time to go up to Jerusalem. He must needs suffer and rise again, or Christianity could never begin, or the kingdom be hereafter set up.

He fully exposed the wickedness and hypocrisy of the priests and Pharisees, who were pretending to righteousness by the law. God had provided a great supper, but men made light of it and rejected it (Matt. 22; 23). He then spoke of the immense change close at hand. Their house was left desolate, and would be destroyed; and Jerusalem, the future metropolis of the earth, would be destroyed and long trampled under foot (Luke 21). Very strange was all this to Jewish ears. All this implied a total change, and an entire setting aside of the ancient religion of the Jew, with all his privileges, and all of which came to pass. He was presented to the Jewish nation for the last time in the flesh as Messiah, and utterly rejected. His last passover came. See Him sitting with His disciples—"With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." After the supper He took the place of the paschal lamb. "This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me....This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you." Yes, a far greater redemption was about to be accomplished than the redemption from Egypt, which they had just commemorated. But as yet they understood not. He was about to be "reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end" (Luke 22:37).

What a night was that! What words did Jesus speak to His beloved disciples. "Jesus 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." John 13:1. We must, however, remember, that as yet they were only disciples, just as John had had disciples. They had been drawn to Him as a center, and yet He was alone; they could not be members of His body, neither was that wondrous path as yet revealed. Wondrous was the truth He had revealed to them, for He had shown them, under the figure of the corn of wheat, that He must die or remain alone. "Verily, verily,

I say unto you. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). No words can express the importance of this great truth, that until He should have died, been buried, and had risen from the dead, Christianity could not begin. He, until then, must remain alone. Nothing then could be more false than the error that the incarnation of Christ is salvation, or the improvement of man. His holy life and heavenly teachings could not have imparted full help to man, lost man. He must needs suffer the atoning death of the cross; and even that death is not the improvement of man, but the end of man in death.

But all this was evidently utterly unknown to His disciples, and how little known now. What God had made known by all the holy prophets was, that one like the Son of man should come in the clouds of heaven, deliver His people, and reign over the whole world. This the disciples expected just as they were. There were also other prophecies which spoke of the sufferings of Messiah; of His bearing the sins of His people; of His awful death, forsaken of God (Isa. 53; Psalm 22; and many others). And had not every sacrifice, with all the blood of beasts, shed from the days of Abel, pointed on to Him, the Lamb of God? But as yet they knew not, and felt not the need of this. Never had it dawned on their minds that He must bear the wrath, and be forsaken of God, for their sins. And how few really know this now. Do you?

Well, the time had come that instead of receiving the long foretold kingdom, He must suffer such treatment from man, and bear the whole weight of God's wrath against sin, as never was and never can be borne again. And thus He must be turned out of, and depart from, the world He had made.

We must then read this wondrous discourse (John 12-17) as anticipating the very period of His rejection on earth, and His presence in glory above the heavens. He knew it all, all we should need. "Clean every whit," as born of God, and as a new creation in Him; yet we have still to contend with an evil world, and the flesh in us, though reckoned dead. It is His blessed service to wash our feet, to restore our souls to communion by the Word during His absence, exalted as He is above all heavens (John 13).

He knows all the sore difficulties of the path during His absence. We shall not see Him now; but we may believe in Him, as we believe in God. Could He have said this if He had been only a man? He is as truly the Object of faith, as God the Father. And now, being so near His departure, He tells them that of which no man had ever heard before. He lifts up their thoughts far above the earthly kingdom of Israel, and He says, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 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." They do not seem to have understood this in the least. Do we? What would a place in this world be to us if we really grasped the wondrous grace revealed to us in these words—that He who loved us, and gave Himself for us, is gone to prepare a place for us in the glory, and will come Himself for the one special purpose, to take us and have us with Himself? Is this the love of that Man in the glory at the right hand of God? Oh, child of God, canst thou say, He loved me and is coming for me, to have me with Himself? Does He not thus say to us, "Let not your heart be troubled"? Remember, there had not been a word of all this in the Old Testament, or in His teaching, until the night of His betrayal. The nearer He approached the terrible hour of darkness and wrath, the sweeter the savor of Jesus as the meat offering. In all things, and in every way, He was only proved to be a sweet

savor to God— without spot, blameless. How well did He know the need of His Church during the long period of His absence. Let us inquire, Whom did He appoint and promise to take care of her until His return?

The First Years of Christianity: Gospel of the Glory

We shall better understand the wondrous character of the gospel of the glory, as preached in the First Years of Christianity, if we dwell briefly on the gospel of the kingdom, which preceded it, and which, when the Church has gone to glory, will succeed it on earth.

In the preaching of John the Baptist, the heavens were only opened to one Person, the Son of God. He was the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. The heavens were opened to Him, and on Him the Holy Spirit could descend (Matt. 3:16-17). John's testimony was the last and greatest of the prophets to Israel. It was the ax laid to the root of the trees—to all Jewish prejudices and self righteousness—and was a solemn call to repentance and confession of sins; and finally he announced the Messiah. There was no opening into the heavens for sinners, but only for the one Man who came from heaven.

In the preaching also of Jesus to Israel, it was not the gospel of the glory, but of the kingdom. Several bright gleams shone forth, shall we say in the prophetic version of the Mount, foreshadowing the coming glory? There were two men with Him in the glory. During His last night before His death, there were wondrous words from His lips, both to the disciples and to the Father. He spoke not of Jerusalem, nor this earth, nor the kingdom on the earth, but of the Father's house, and many mansions, and of His going to prepare a place for them; and He said, "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."

And He said to the Father, when about to be with Him, in the glory that He had with Him before the world was, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory" (John 17:24). Yet even after His resurrection the apostles did not understand this. They were still occupied with the promised kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6).

It is also very remarkable, that during the forty days Jesus remained with them, we do not read that He spoke to them about the Church, or the gospel of the glory, but "being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." When the Holy Spirit had come down, Jesus having ascended up into heaven, and the new company of believers having been baptized by the Holy Spirit—the Church being thus formed—the preaching even then was chiefly what characterizes the kingdom. Very distinctly so in Acts 3:17-21. Peter unlocked the door, so to speak, by repentance and baptism into the kingdom of heaven—the kingdom on earth, while the King was away in heaven. The preaching went thus far, the apostles saying, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:30-31).

As yet the preaching is limited to Israel, and to the promises made to their fathers—very much, indeed, to the kingdom to be set up on this earth. Not a word yet of the gospel of the glory. Jesus was gone up into heaven, and He would come again. But the gospel preached did not reach up to

heaven opened to man.

In Acts 7 there was an immense change. Israel, in the murder of Stephen, committed their final sin as a nation, in rejecting the Holy Spirit. All is now over with them for the present. All is over as to restoring the kingdom to them now; and at the same moment the heavens are opened to man, to the believing, dying Stephen. Full of the Holy Spirit, he "Looked up steadfastly into heaven, AND SAW THE GLORY OF GOD, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Alas, from that day they have stopped their ears.

From that moment, though the earth has rejected the Son of God, the heavens have remained open to man, to every one who believes. That day there stood near a young man, at whose feet were laid the clothes of the murderers. We shall hear of him again. That young man, Saul, was consenting to his death; that young man was the chosen instrument to go to the nations and proclaim the gospel of the glory.

In Acts 9:22, 26, we have another most remarkable advance. This very young man, Saul, mad with persecuting rage, was on his way to Damascus, with authority from the chief priests to bring believers bound to Jerusalem. A stream of glory shines right down from heaven. He says, "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me." And he says, from that heavenly glory, "I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" What amazement seized that young man! Heaven was opened, and the glory descends, comes down to man, to man the sinner, the enemy. And that voice from heaven, from the brightness of the glory, speaks to the sinner mad with persecuting rage, and asks a question which implies that those believers whom this young man persecutes are one with Himself, who speaks from the glory. Astonished, he asks, "Who art Thou, Lord?" Who can this Lord of glory be? And he hears the wondrous reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Now it was from the glorified Jesus Saul received the commission to go forth as His chosen witness and heavenly messenger, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." You will see that this was greatly in advance of all that had gone before. The gospel of the kingdom of God to be set up on this earth, most true in its time, was altogether different from the gospel of the glory and the heavenly vision. Discipleship by repentance and baptism was most prominent as the entrance into the kingdom, in John's preaching, in the Lord's also, in Matthew and Mark. But Paul was not thus sent. Indeed, as we have said, his preaching was far in advance of that of the twelve, as seen up to Acts 9. He is sent from the vision of the heavenly glory to both Jews and Gentiles, to turn them from darkness to light. It was to take out a people for heaven, from the power of Satan to God. And what he preached was not what man must do, but that Christ must suffer, and "be the first that should rise from the dead, and should SHOW LIGHT unto the people, and to the Gentiles." And he could say, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

Now while the twelve preached Jesus as the crucified, dead, risen, and exalted Lord and Messiah, Paul at once proclaims Him the Son of God. There was now nothing more to be expected from

man. It was no longer what he must do, but what Christ must have done, who had appeared to him in heavenly glory. Thus he opened the Scriptures: "opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." To him it was the Son of God who had thus died for him, who had been made sin for him, who had put away sins by the sacrifice of Himself, and had sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Could he doubt the perfection of that work which Christ must do, and had done? No; He who had once been crucified for him, had appeared from heaven in brightest glory—in light beyond the eastern noonday sun. God had raised Him from the dead, who had been delivered for our offenses, and raised Him for the very purpose of our justification. Thus he preached, and thus, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote. This was his gospel of the glory. Let us hear him.

He says, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not. So that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them.... Because it is the God who spoke, that out of darkness light should shine, who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:3-6; Literal Trans.). Thus the glory of the gospel of Christ shines down from heaven on a lost and guilty world. All is darkness here. Man is darkness. Satan, the god of this world, has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving; he presents every form of false religion and dark superstition to hinder the rays of heavenly glory shining into the poor dark soul of man.

Has the radiancy of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ever shone into your soul? Has that risen and glorified Jesus ever spoken direct to you? Can you say, I have heard His voice speaking to me? What a color the heavenly vision gave to all the preachings of Paul, that once fiery young persecutor! When he preached forgiveness of sins to guilty sinners, it was straight from the glory. Nay, the inspired writings of Paul will be all fresh and new, and heavenly, if we read them as in the First Years of Christianity, in the warmth and brightness of the heavenly vision. They will indeed be like a river of life, and light from the throne of glory, of God and the Lamb. Let us remember the power of that vision of the glory which attracted Paul from everything under the sun. May it be so with us.

The First Years of Christianity: Order of Preaching

First, as to preaching the Word. This evidently varied according to circumstances. The first day, the Pentecost, was ushered in by the descent of the Holy Spirit. A vast multitude was called together by the rushing sound from heaven. The assembly of God on earth was formed by the Holy Spirit. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke with miraculous power. Peter was then used to preach the crucified and risen Christ. The result is a new company is formed at Jerusalem. That company is called the Church, or more properly translated, "the assembly." The word thus translated always means an assembly. It is so used to describe the nation of Israel in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). It is the same word in the Greek used to describe a crowd in the theater at Ephesus (Acts 19:32,39,41), and it is properly translated assembly.

But what is this new company called "the Church," or "the assembly"? That it is a new company is clear. "Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God" (1 Cor. 10:32).

Does this company, "the church of God," ever appear in Scripture before Pentecost? (Acts 2.) Never, except in two passages, and there as a future thing (Matt. 16:18; 18:17): "I will build My church," "Tell it unto the church." Peter preached at Pentecost, but the Lord by the Holy Spirit formed this new assembly. It was not that He formed what we see now, hundreds of sects, or denominations. He did not form the Greek, or Roman, or Anglican churches, etc., but "the church of God." It is of immense interest to inquire what this was, and what it is. Did you ever do this?

It was composed of all saved persons. "The Lord added [together, or] to the church daily such as should be saved." This new company then was composed of such as should be saved. The true Church of Christ was only composed of the saved, or such as were being saved. All that were saved were added together, and formed the assembly of Christ. To this agree the words of Paul, "To the assembly of God which is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints," etc. And again, "To the assembly of God which is in Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia" (JND Trans.).

Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1. Thus it is most certain that no person belonged to the Church of God, in the First Years of Christianity, except the holy ones, the sanctified in Christ Jesus. Be not deceived, if this is not your case, you have no part nor lot in the Church of God.

The Church is also the body of Christ, "and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). And mark, the body is not a body of Christians organized by men. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:12-13). This body, this one body, is composed of all true saved believers, and is formed by the Holy Spirit. Dear fellow believers, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. 12:27). Such is the Church, the body of Christ. "And

God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing" (1 Cor. 12:28).

Mark, this is all of God. He set what He pleased in the Church, and what He pleases still remains. Do not be too sure that what you call the Church is the Church of God, but search the Scriptures. Only of this be sure, that if you are not saved and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, whatever other church you may belong to, you do not at present belong to the Church of God.

Now as to the preaching and ministry of the Word of God in the First Years of Christianity, we must notice the difference between individual responsibility to Christ, and ministry in the assembly. Individually, they had the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to where they should go, as Paul in Acts 13. He and Barnabas were sent by the Holy Spirit. And they had the fellowship of the assembly at Antioch. And we find them preaching Christ, and declaring the glad tidings at Antioch in Pisidia. Then Paul and Silas are directed to Philippi, by the riverside. See the same guidance at Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth. In Ephesus we find Paul for two years daily in the school of one Tyrannus (Acts 19).

So it is evident that the evangelist or teacher is responsible, as guided by the Holy Spirit, to preach the Word wherever the Spirit opens a door for him. These should also be commended and helped on in their work by the assembly (3 John).

It is, however, astonishing how little we find as to the assemblies' meetings for worship and edification, that answers to modern Christendom. Suppose you look through the Acts and the epistles, do you find anything in the least like the mass? Is there any priest to offer a sacrifice for the living or the dead? It could not possibly be, since all the worshipers were forever perfected by the one sacrifice of Christ; and there is no more sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:1-18). To break bread in remembrance of that death through which they had redemption, even the forgiveness of sins, was done by the disciples on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). To offer another sacrifice would be to deny the eternal efficacy of the one sacrifice which had been offered. Do you find the disciples ever did this?

That all true believers were worshiping priests, is evident. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15). "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5).

What kind of places of worship had they? Had they churches, or chapels, or temples? Had they consecrated bells, or buildings? These abound now, but do we find a trace of such in the New Testament? Not a trace. We find them in an upper chamber in Acts 20:8. Wherever the saints were gathered together to Christ, there was, and there only, the true Church or assembly. Was it not so?

Worship was spiritual—in spirit and in truth and in the holiest (Heb. 10:19). This was the very immediate presence of God, the third heavens. The tabernacle or place of worship of Israel was a figure of this. There is the atmosphere; the starry heavens; and the dwelling place of God, the third heavens, the holiest. And in spirit the whole Church had holy boldness there as worshipers. But as to buildings, so called places of worship, we do not find one, even in imperial Rome. Read the last

chapter in the Epistle to the Romans, and all must admit that all we find are assemblies in houses. Thus the place was nothing. The Father had found worshipers to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

But when gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, do we find the order of worship and ministry described in the Word of God?

Concerning this matter, we find the Holy Spirit present (Acts 13:1-4). And whatever the diversity of gifts present, "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1 Cor. 12:7). Mark, this is in the assembly. But no man could take the place of the Spirit of God, and no man could take the place of the Lord. But if confusion took place, did they not appoint a man as the minister over the assembly? We never find such a thing. Confusion had come in 1 Corinthians 14. Do we read that one man therefore must take the lead or the whole service? No; we read, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." Read to the end of the chapter—1 Cor. 14:29-40. It is quite true that human arrangements have set all this aside. But such was the Christianity of the First Years. The presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit was a reality. And Paul says, "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" (vs. 37).

Now whatever men may set up, it is most certain that when the assembly is gathered together for worship and edification, it is the will of the Lord that there should be this holy liberty, for two or three to be used of the Holy Spirit in ministry. Surely we have lost that deep sense of the Lord's presence which was in the assemblies in the early days of Christianity. A mere imitation, however, of this true order of ministry in the assembly, without real heart subjection to the Holy Spirit ever present, would be utterly powerless, and would soon degenerate into radicalism or self-will.

If, on the other hand, human pretensions have usurped the place of the Spirit, and human organization has entirely displaced scriptural primitive order, let us not boast, but humble ourselves, and ever remember the apostolic commendation is to God and the word of His grace, and not to any party or denomination of men. And though Christendom has ceased to walk according to the commands of Christ, yet we are warranted in expecting to find some who desire to own who is the Holy and the True. To such Jesus still says, "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and HAST KEPT MY WORD, and hast not denied My name." And further, to such He says, "I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev. 3:8 11).

Beloved reader, is the Lord's word nothing to you? Is it quite enough for you to go on with the stream of modern profession? Is it nothing to you what name you bear in Babylon? Or, while conscious of much failure, is it the desire of your heart to answer to what the Lord so graciously approves in the above scripture, indeed in all Scripture?

May the Lord use these few remarks on the First Years of Christianity to stir up our hearts, to seek to walk so as to have the testimony that what we do in these last days of Christendom may be pleasing in His sight.

Many of the readers may say, Would it not be most profitable to look into the scriptures for an answer to this question—

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

We will look to the Lord to enable us to do so.

The First Years of Christianity: Promise of Holy Spirit

In departing from this world, how tender Christ's care and love for the Church. He says, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter [or one who shall take the entire charge of you], that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.... But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The world, not knowing the Spirit, may appoint its emperors, kings, queens, and its high dignitaries, to take the place of head and caretaker of a church. But our blessed Lord named none of these. No, the world would persecute His Church, or those who were His. In the world they should have tribulation. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning" (John 14 & 15).

And still more fully, instead of setting up the long-promised kingdom on earth, He says, "I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." Then He fully describes His work.

His presence will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. "Of sin, because they believe not on Me." There needs no further trial of man; the world has rejected and killed the Prince of Life. It is proved and concluded under sin.

"Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more." If the world is proved under sin, there is righteousness in heaven. The righteous Father has received His Son.

"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." this world's very prince and god is judged. Execution then of judgment is sure to him, and all that are his, though God's long-suffering tarries still.

Now mark the work of the Spirit during the absence of Christ. "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. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." Such is the infinite provision Jesus promised before He departed from them, for the whole period of His absence. We shall see shortly how all was fulfilled. He then opens His heart to them, and tells them of His departure (John 16).

Surely He felt His rejection; did He not weep over Jerusalem? Though just about to be cut off, and have nothing of His earthly kingdom and glory, He could now lift up His eyes to heaven, and say, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." Though He well knew the extent of the world's rejection, yet His tender heart felt its deep joy in those whom the Father gave to Him. How much He gives them, how much He asks for them! How often He names to the Father those whom the Father had given to Him, and all on the ground of His finished work. Yes, this was His full blessed title, as man, He had finished the work which was given Him to do.

“And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.” Yes, in the beginning, in eternity, however many myriads of ages this world may have been hung upon nothing, and rolled in space—yet, “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.” Truly God; He WAS GOD; distinct in Person, WITH God; in eternity, the eternal now. Yes, immediately before He crossed the brook Cedron to offer Himself the infinite sacrifice for sins, He could thus look up to heaven, though rejected and cut off on earth, with the righteous claim as man to be WITH God, as He had been with Him in eternity. Could any created being claim such a place? This scripture with many others, affords absolute proof that He was very God and truly man.

Now we see Him humbling Himself, and voluntarily giving Himself up into the hands of sinful men. All power in heaven and on earth was in His hands. They were made to feel it and fall to the ground. But He who made all things gave Himself to be bound, to be mocked, to be scourged, to be crucified. A robber was preferred to Him in whom was no fault. The wicked representative of Gentile power was compelled to say, as judge, “I find no fault in Him.” He was made a curse, hanging on the accursed tree, for the very people that gnashed their teeth with rage as they watched Him die.

It was in the end of the ages, every age of the trial of man, that He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26). Then “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” “But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever [or, in continuance], sat down on the right hand of God....For by one offering He hath perfected forever [in continuance] them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:12,14). “Who His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree.” “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Pet. 3:18). All Scripture from Genesis to Revelation bears witness to the true propitiation, the bearing and meeting the wrath of God against sin, and the true substitution of Christ for His people's sins. We need no learned and profane theory of the atonement, but with adoring hearts worship God for His great love to us in thus giving His Son to be lifted up. It is only on that cross we learn what our sin really is in the sight of God. Blessed Jesus! it was for me Thou sufferedst thus.

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” See 1 Corinthians 15:1-15. We shall see more of this when we come to the faith held in the beginning.

Christ died for our sins and was buried. But then all appeared to be lost. The disciples were filled with sadness. They had looked for very different things, even the redemption of Israel from the Roman yoke. The only righteous One was laid in the grave—the end of all hope for man as a child of Adam—the end of man. The only righteous Man had died the accursed death of the cross, and was laid dead in the grave. Now just suppose this were all, then every ray of hope is extinguished. All is under death and judgment. If Christ is not risen, there is no hope, and no good news possible for man. That high-day Sabbath, when Jesus lay dead in the grave, was the end of Judaism, with all its sacrifices and temple service. The veil was rent; what a change!

How blessed to dwell on that resurrection morn, that first Lord's day, the first day of the week. If we may use such words, one eternity ended when He lay in the grave, the other began when He rose

from the dead. Judaism was left desolate —the new creation began. Who can tell the exceeding greatness of the power of God to usward, when He raised Jesus from the dead? (See Eph. 1:19-23.) The consequences to us of that resurrection are infinite and eternal.

We cannot but linger over the results of His resurrection, even before we go on to the forming of the Church or assembly of Christ. "For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." Very blessed the instruction, whether in reference to the future kingdom as in Matthew and Mark, or as preparatory to the formation of the Church, as in Luke 24 and John 20. What a change, and the disciples knew it not. There was the proof that He had risen from the dead; but the disciples, even Peter and John, went away to their own home.

Not so Mary Magdalene. She had already been delivered from great misery, for seven demons had been cast out of her. She has little intelligence; indeed, she seems to think He is still dead. But she lingers at the sepulcher as if He were gone; she had nothing left. There she lingered, her heart deeply attached to Jesus. And is the tender love of Jesus changed to His sheep now that He is risen from the dead? He is close to the weeper, and asks, "Woman, why weepest thou?... She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if Thou have borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." Jesus said, one word, "Mary." O what a thrill of joy to that desolate heart! "She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master." He was, however, no more to be held or known as Messiah. "Touch Me not." He must go to the Father to receive the kingdom and return. He sends her with the joyful news of Christianity begun.

The First Years of Christianity: the Doctrines Taught

We have already looked at the starting point, THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, inspired in the full sense of God speaking to us, "Thus saith the Lord." It must be evident then that without this starting point we have no basis. If God has not spoken, all is blank uncertainty. But since God has spoken, we need no man or church to tell us that what He has said is true. What then were the doctrines taught?

Let us begin with the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross. What was that death to the apostles, and the early Church, as seen in their inspired writings? We read, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). The more we meditate on these words, the more wonderful they seem. Think how those scriptures of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets bring before us this great fact, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. What victims had been offered in sacrifice, from Abel downward to the lamb that must be killed, ere Israel could be redeemed from Egypt! There was no escape from judgment and slavery until that lamb was killed. Then what blood had to be shed to make it possible for man to be kept in relation with Jehovah in the wilderness, and in the land! There was no approach to God but by blood.

The faith of Abraham was expressed in those wonderful words, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb." Yes, Jehovah-jireh, the Lord, will see, or provide. The faith of the early Church was, that the Lord hath seen to it; God hath provided His Lamb. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh [beareth] away the sin of the world!" Behold the living Person of the Son of God, God's Lamb. God has seen to man's deepest need; God has provided. The doctrine of the First Years of Christianity all centered in Him, God's Lamb. Not man's lamb — not man's providing — but the sent One of God. The Holy One was delivered for our offenses, and was raised from the dead "for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Notice, all was divine certainty. The whole Church of God had peace with God, and this peace was made by the very blood of Christ. "And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight" (Col. 1:20-22). Thus they HAD peace with God, and that peace was made by the blood of the cross. They had not one thing to do to make their peace with God. Jesus had made that peace by His own blood; they had been enemies, but they were now reconciled. What was the object of Jesus in dying, as to all believers? Through death to present all believers holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable in His sight.

Such was the value of the atoning death of Christ to all believers in the First Years of Christianity, and such was their knowledge of God. And they had such certainty as to the value of the redemption blood of Christ, that they could so peacefully give thanks. Just hear them. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom

of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:12-14). Oh, what precious certainty they had in those First Years! How seldom do we see anything like it now. What a separate people they were from the dark, doubting, guilty world around them. They were meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love, in whom, in Christ, they had redemption. Sins were all forgiven. Ah, it was something worth while to be a Christian in those First Years. What completeness, was it not? As it is written, "And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power."

In those years they had a very exalted conception of the glory of the Person of the Son of God, as giving infinite value to His atoning sacrifice. "Who being the brightness of His [God's] glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3).

That is the starting point in the Hebrews—the finished work. He has done the work on the cross that puts away our sins forever. The proof of this is clear. He SITS, His work being done, on the right hand of the Majesty on high. There is very little notice taken of this in these last years. It is very important to remember this, when we think of priesthood, or of worship. God has seen to it, God has provided His Lamb. The work that puts away our sins is done. God has accepted that work, and that Person who has done it, to His own right hand. What rest to the soul this gave in those First Years.

Another thing was then revealed—that while the offerings of the law could never rend the veil, and bring poor sinful man into the presence of God, Christ having come, by the one offering of Himself on the cross, the veil was rent, sins were purged. The way into the holiest was then opened, and all this was eternal—not for a year, but for eternity. This is all opened up to us in Hebrews 9. For this purpose He appeared "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

No person bearing the name of Christ ever thought of questioning the purpose of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, the bearing the real judgment of God on sins. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:27-28). Thus the true doctrine of the First Years was this: that Christ came in the end of the world, or at the end of all the ages of the trial of man; that He undertook to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. This will be yet seen in the new heavens and the new earth, that He undertook and bore the judgment of divine wrath due to the sins of many—for this purpose He was offered, the sacrifice for sins. When He appears a second time, there will be no question of sins for those who wait for Him.

All this is abundantly confirmed and applied in the next chapter, Hebrews 10. God could never be satisfied with those many sacrifices of the law which could never purge the conscience from sins. The Son of God says, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." The Son of God came, He offered Himself once, the sacrifice for sins, and then in continuance sat down at the right hand of God. Now what was the effect of this one sacrifice to all believers as revealed in the First Years of Christianity? "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." This fact is of such immense importance, that we read further, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us," etc. It was very blessed when men believed this witness of the Holy Spirit—that God in infinite love

had sent His Son in the body prepared for Him that He might put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself—that the Son had done this, and that as to all charge of sins against the believer, the Holy Spirit was Himself a witness, that all believers separated to God by the death of His Son, were perfected forever, or in continuance. Ah, when men no longer believed the witness of the Holy Spirit, then they invented masses, penances, fresh sprinklings, etc., until the witness of the Holy Spirit as to the efficacy of that one sacrifice was forgotten.

Oh, the folly, with such scriptures before us, of again offering sacrifices for the living and the dead, that can never take away sins. If we would enjoy peace with God, we must turn away from all these inventions of men, and go back to that which was in the beginning. Then it was distinctly understood that God said, “And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” As many as were in the light had fellowship with one another. They knew the whole matter of sins was settled forever, that the blood of God's dear Son cleansed them from all sin.

It is manifest from the very opening chapters of the history of the sons of fallen Adam, that there could be no approach to God most holy but by the death of a Substitute. Thus Abel came before God through the death of the lamb. Thus did Noah worship God as he stepped out of the ark. Thus did Abraham also through the sacrifice on his altar. Thus only could Israel be redeemed from Egypt by the death of the lamb. It must be killed and its blood sprinkled. And thus for forty years was the lesson taught in the sacrifices in the wilderness—that without the shedding of blood was no remission. Yea, for fifteen hundred years this great truth was set forth in every sacrifice on the brazen altar, that death alone can put away sin. And yet all these sacrifices could not in themselves put away sins. All pointed forward to that one Sacrifice that puts away sins forever.

In the prophets they read of a Person who should be wounded for transgressions, bruised for iniquities; a Person on whom Jehovah would lay iniquities; One whom the Lord should bruise (see Isa. 53). That Person they distinctly taught was Jesus, the Son of God (Acts 8). In a word, the one only foundation of the Church of God then was that “we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14), and that this redemption was not for a time only, but was eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). This great foundation truth runs through the epistles. All believers then could say, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” Soon all the redeemed will be gathered around the Lamb in the midst of the throne; yea, and all angelic hosts will say with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.”

Reader, are you quite sure you have that “redemption through His blood” here? Then you may be assured you will sing His everlasting praise there. But if not, to whom can you look for forgiveness of sins?

The First Years of Christianity: What Is the Church?

The word “church” is used in so many ways that it is difficult for many to understand what the Church of God really is, as spoken of in Scripture. “Feed the church of God” (Acts 20:28). “Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32). Thus in the New Testament there are three classes on this earth: the Jewish nation, the Gentile world, and the Church of God.

Do we ever find these three classes in the Old Testament? Never; neither in Moses, the Psalms, nor the prophets. Is that a fact? It is. Then what did Stephen refer to when he spoke of “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38)? If you read the context, you will see that it was the children of Israel, or the nation of Israel gathered out of Egypt in the wilderness. It was one of the two things then on earth, and not the third thing, called in the New Testament “the church of God.” That is quite clear.

I should like to ask, When was it first named in Scripture? It was first named by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 16, but as a future thing. He said, “Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” It is generally supposed that all saved persons, all believers, from the very first, say from Abel downward, belong to the Church. Do we not read of the Jewish church? Yes, but not in Scripture—only in the books of men who are guided by custom, and who do not examine Scripture for what they say.

Then again we hear and read of the church of Rome, church of England, Wesleyan, and Presbyterian church, etc.

Is this a correct way of speaking? Well, men understand what they mean. But our Lord did not mean any of these when He said, “I will build My church.” No, He did not say, I will build the church of Rome, or any of the churches that men have built. If any one of these was the Church, that would exclude all other believers in the other churches from being saved, as the Church is also the “one body,” and also the bride of Christ. “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:12-13). “There is one body” (Eph. 4:4). Who are meant by those that are baptized by the one Spirit into this one body, the Church of God? “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1 Cor. 1:2). Is it not evident from these scriptures that all true Christians form the one body of Christ, the Church of God? So that if Christ meant any of those bodies of men which claim to be the one body, the Church of God—or, to put it very plainly—if Christ meant that He would build the church of Rome, and that therefore it is the Church of God, this would undoubtedly prove that all outside the church of Rome are not Christians at all.

These remarks would be equally applicable to any other church which assumed the position of being the Church of God. As the Church is the one body of Christ, you cannot be a saved Christian

if you are outside that one body.

Would it not then be foolish work to spend our time in trying to prove which of the many churches of Christendom is the true Church, since to do so would also prove that all other true Christians were not members of the body of Christ? This is not our object, but simply to inquire what is the Church, the one body of Christ, who is the Head of the body in heaven.

What is God's thought of the Church? We have already said that the Church is not once named in the Old Testament; was it then an after-thought of God, on the rejection of the Messiah by Israel? Far from this; we shall find that it was the first great purpose of God in giving His Son to accomplish redemption. And though this His purpose was never revealed, but kept hid for ages, yet we have most striking types of the Church, the bride of Christ, in the Old Testament. We will take three of these types, or pictures, of the Church, the bride of Christ. No doubt the Holy Spirit will teach us by these pictures, and help us to understand the New Testament scriptures better.

The first will illustrate the work of our God and Father; the second, the work of the Holy Spirit in gathering this bride; and the third will bring before us the Bridegroom Himself, and very precious details as to how the bride is redeemed and brought to Himself. We refer to Eve, Rebecca, and Ruth. Bear in mind, that we do not seek to prove the doctrine of the Church by these types, but use them to help us to understand the doctrine as taught in the Acts and the epistles.

EVE

In Genesis 2 we have the first Adam as a figure of Him that was to come. God placed him in paradise, the garden of Eden. "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." How wonderfully this reveals the thought of God in eternity—His purpose that the last Adam, now in the paradise of God, should not be alone. We then see how God formed the creatures and brought them to Adam, and how Adam gave them their names. But there was not a help meet for him in paradise; not one suited to him; not one like him; not one of the same nature that corresponded to him. The animals were with him in paradise, companions we may say; but there was no real correspondence. No creature was of his nature meet for him—no creature meet to be ONE with Adam.

Mark, this was absolutely the case until "The LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man." It is quite true, we could not have seen this hidden type of Christ and the Church if the Holy Spirit had not revealed it in Eph. 5:30. Now all is clear.

There was no Eve until Adam had been laid in the figure of death—the deep sleep. Until then he was alone, though in the midst of all creation. The Lord Jesus tells us the very same thing; speaking of Himself, He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). He was there with His disciples, or in heaven in the midst of angelic hosts; but as to His nature, He was and must be forever alone unless He die and be raised from the dead.

The moment Eve saw Adam, she was like him, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. It will be so with the second Eve, the one bride of Christ; when she shall be presented to Him, she will be glorious;

yea, the moment we see Him, we shall be like Him (Eph. 5:27; 1 John 3:2). There was no Eve until Adam in figure died and rose again. Then she corresponded perfectly to Adam—was part of Himself. There was only one meet to be so. And the New Testament carries all this out fully as to the Church, the bride of Christ. To faith, all is now sure; but the presentation in the perfect likeness of Christ has not yet come. Surely all this should prepare us to find something marvelously new and different when Christ, the last Adam, had died and had risen from the dead. And that something is new; that new creation is the Church of God, one with Christ, the Head in heaven. “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.” Thus was Eve meet to be Adam's companion and a help meet in the paradise of Eden. And all this was the work of God, according to His own purpose.

And is it so, are all believers, according to the purpose of God, made meet for the paradise of God? Yes, we can all give “thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12). As this is the first figure of the Church, it is well to note how all is of God. And this answers to Ephesians 1 and 2.

Just as Eve was one with Adam, blest in and with him with every blessing in the earthly paradise, it was God who thus blessed her, and thus placed her the one bride of Adam, who had been dead in figure and was alive again. All was of God—so now of all the saints of God. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. But all, all is of God. Did God raise Adam from His deep sleep? Then “what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.... And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:19-23).

And then the same blessed God has raised us up from the dead: “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:5-6).

Yes, the first thought of God in giving His Son, was that He might not remain alone, the Man in the glory of the heavenly paradise, but that He should have a bride, the Church, in His own perfect likeness. Sins and sin forever passed away, she should share in His glory forever with and like Him—having His own sinless perfection, His own very nature. Oh, what will it be to be the companion of the last Adam in eternal glory, in every way corresponding to Him, as Eve to Adam! No other creature in the universe is to have or can have this place. We will next go on in our meditations to the second figure or picture of the bride of Christ. Can you, reader, recognize the hand of God (as in the picture we have looked at for a moment) in your new creation? Then dwell on the purpose of God as to your eternal future.

Fixed on Christ

"Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Heb. 12:3.

When our hearts are fixed on Christ, there is peace, progress, and blessing. The reason why souls very often have not peace is because they are occupied with themselves, for they do not find what they think ought to be in a Christian.

Whereas, if I am looking at Christ, there is no difficulty.

The great question of self will never be settled till Christ is the center of everything. W.K.

"Of the vast universe of bliss,

The Center Thou, and Sun;

The eternal theme of praise is this,

To Heaven's beloved One, Worthy,

O Lamb of God, art Thou

That every knee to Thee should bow."

Giving up the World

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

Go Unto Joseph: the Way of Blessing

Joseph is the most beautiful and complete type of the Lord Jesus in the days of His humiliation and in the days of His exaltation. The day is not come yet when God will compel men to give Jesus His due, because God has what Pharaoh had not-long patience-and the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation.

Joseph, you will remember, went out in the guilelessness and love of his heart to meet his brethren (Gen. 37). They plotted against him to slay him, and at length he was sold to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, the price of the meanest slave. And I need not remind you of another who came from His Father's house to see how His brethren fared, and met with precisely the same treatment-"His own received Him not"-and at length for thirty pieces of silver He was betrayed, and sold, and then cast out of this world- not into a dungeon, but a grave.

It is true, loving hands took Him down from the cross and placed Him in a sepulcher; but wicked hands sealed Him there, and the world hoped never to see Him again; "but God raised Him from the dead." The One whom men slew, God raised up.

He came in all the love of His heart, but man had no love for Him. I ask you, my reader, Have you any love in your heart for Him? Does He look in and see in your heart affection for Himself? If not, do not you be the one to judge those who cast Him out in the day of His lowliness and humiliation.

As Pharaoh placed Joseph by his own side in his day, and they cried, "Bow the knee" before him (Gen. 41:40-43), so God has placed Jesus at His right hand today, and commands men everywhere to bow to Him. Every knee shall bow to Jesus; but God would have you bow your knee-and more, bow your heart-to Jesus now. Have you gone down in His presence, delighted to own His value now, delighted to call Him Lord? If not, the sooner you do, the better it will be for you.

The humiliation of Jesus gave Him a moral claim on God for exaltation, and He has exalted Him, and "given Him a name which is above every name." There is no name like the name of Jesus. God has declared that all shall own Him as Lord-angels, men, and demons-and you may be sure all includes you. The demons never owned Him Lord when He was on earth, but the day will come when God will compel them to own Him Lord. And for you, my reader, When is to be your day of owning Him Lord? now, when He is waiting on you in long-suffering grace, or in the day of His power, when you must bow? "Bow the knee" is God's word to you now.

Doubtless, to many a proud Egyptian noble, there was great humiliation in having to bow to this Hebrew servant; but the day of famine came, and neither their pride nor their parentage would meet the pangs of famine. Then they cried to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh's word was, "Go unto Joseph." And many a soul in trouble cries to God. What is God's answer, as it were? "Go to Jesus."

Have you, my reader, the sense of soul hunger? God's word is, Go to Jesus. Do you say, I know what soul hunger is; I would like to be saved, if I knew how to go to Jesus? Look at this interesting narrative, how they came to Joseph.

He was, according to the meaning of his name, Zaphnath Paaneah, "a revealer of secrets," and "the savior of the world [age]." And is not this what Jesus is?

Look at Him in the 4th of John, when that poor woman met Him at the well. Did He not show Himself to her as the revealer of secrets when He said to her, "Thou hast had five husbands"? Ah! Christ knows all; Christ knows every sin, and for those who believe in Him He has pardoned every one. Knowing all about us, He loved us; and loving us, He came down to save us.

When the woman found He knew all about her, did she flee? No; she stayed and talked with Him, and she was one moment a convicted sinner, and the next Christ revealed Himself to her; and she left her waterpot and went into the city and said, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" Instead of being afraid of Him, she called to all to come and know Him too; and they came, and found He was not only the revealer of secrets, but the Savior of the age-the true Joseph.

Have you come to this revealer of secrets, this Savior of the age, yet? Does your conscience answer, No; I have not come to Him yet? Why not, my reader? Perhaps you say in your heart, I do not know how He would receive me if I came.

Let us look at how Joseph received his brethren when they came to him in their need.

"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt." Gen. 42:1-3. They heard that there was corn in Egypt. They heard that there was deliverance to be had if they could only get it, and they were perishing. They heard there was salvation, and they felt their need, and felt they would like to be saved; but they could not get salvation without going to the savior. They could not get deliverance apart from the deliverer; they could not get food in their hunger save from Joseph-Joseph the despised one, the one they had hated, the one they had cast out and sold, but the one whom God had raised up to have every resource in his power, everything that could meet their need.

And you, my reader, do you feel you are in need of salvation? Have you heard of a deliverance which you would like to be yours? Is your soul hungry, and have you heard of "bread, enough and to spare"? Have you heard of salvation that others have known, and would you like it too? Then you must come into living contact with the Savior. It is from the Savior only you can get salvation. Jesus is that Savior, and He waits and longs to save you.

Joseph's brethren are in need now, and they come to Joseph; and you must do just the same.

"And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth." v. 6.

They come and bow themselves down to Joseph; and it is a blessed thing when you are compelled, even by your need, to bow to Jesus, for He is the only one who can meet that need.

"And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.... And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies: hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.... And he put them all together into ward three days." vv. 7-17.

His brethren did not know Joseph, but he knew them. He spoke roughly to them. They thought he was a hard man. Do you think Christ is an "austere man"? He will tell you what you are, tell you that you are a sinner full of enmity to God, that there is no good thing in you. People do not like that. They do not like to be shown what is in their hearts.

Joseph deals with his brethren as God does with the sinner, for God must get at our consciences, and must make us feel and know what we have been and are. So Joseph's dealings with his brethren arouse conscience, for they say, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." v. 21.

It is a wonderful thing when the soul is brought to this point, to own itself a guilty sinner before God. God must have reality. Have you, my reader, ever seen yourself thus in the light of God's presence? Has your conscience ever been awakened to cry, I am undone; I am verily guilty?

"And he [Joseph] turned himself about from them, and wept." And did not another greater than Joseph weep over guilty Jerusalem; and not only weep, but shed His precious blood because of the love of His heart?

"Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack" (v. 25). What is the lesson of the money in the sack? That if you are to get salvation, you cannot buy it. You are too poor to buy it, and God is too rich to sell it. Salvation must be God's free gift, and you must have it as a gift, or not have it at all.

Joseph's brethren went back and told their father all that Joseph had said; and Jacob refused to let Benjamin go down, for he said, "His brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." Gen. 42:38.

But the famine increases. Their need increases; food they must have, or die. Judah offers to be surety for his brother, and Jacob is constrained to let the lad go; but he says, "Do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present,... and take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight. Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: and God Almighty give you mercy before the man." Gen. 43:11-14.

This is man's way of getting salvation. People think they are going to get saved by propitiating God. They will work, and give alms, and what not. But it will not do. No money will buy salvation, and God does not want appeasing. He is waiting to be gracious, waiting for the moment when He

can display what is in His heart, which is only love.

Joseph's brethren came down again to him, and when he saw Benjamin he gave commandment that they should be brought into his house. "And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house." Yes, the soul wakes up to learn it is guilty, and then it fears the presence of God. But Joseph spake comfortably to them to win their hearts, and they sat at meat with him. "And the men marveled one at another. And he took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him."

Then in chapter 44 they have to confess their sins. Judah says, "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants."

This is the point God would bring us to. Not only conscience making us see our state, but there is also the owning of that state. "I acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." So said David in Psalm 32, and so must every soul that really turns to God.

In chapter 45 the wonderful climax is reached. Joseph revealed himself to them. "I am Joseph." The Joseph they had sold as a slave stood before them as ruler over all the land, but meeting them in all the grace of his heart. He caused everyone else to go out, and the guilty ones were left alone in the presence of the savior. What a lovely picture of divine grace follows! "And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." v. 4.

When the work in the conscience is done, then the Lord can come near and reveal Himself. He never comes and reveals Himself till the sinner takes his true place-is angry with himself.

"Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither," he says, "for God did send me before you to preserve life." You have been guilty, Joseph says, but God had a purpose in it.

And man was guilty of nailing the Savior to the cross; but God had His own thoughts, His own meaning in it all; and that very death on the cross of the Savior becomes the basis and groundwork, through atonement, of the great deliverance Christ accomplishes for the sinner; salvation for him is the fruit of the sufferings of the Savior there.

But after all this display of the heart of Joseph to his brethren, and after seventeen years of caring for them, and giving them the best of everything, and rewarding them only love for their hatred, the last chapter of Genesis shows they still did not fully know Joseph.

"When Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him." Gen. 50:15-17.

All this is like some doubting, fearing, unhappy Christians who tell me they believe on the Lord, and yet they have not peace. They are full of fears; they are not sure He has received them and

forgiven them; they do not know His heart; and another thing, they have never had all out with Him. Have no reserves, my reader. Have it all out with Jesus, and do not you be the one to make our Joseph weep; for the heart of the Lord Jesus feels today your lack of trust in Him, after all He has done for you, all the kindness and love He has shown to you. Wound not then His loving heart by any lack of confidence in Him.

"And Joseph said unto them, Fear not." That is just the way the Lord Jesus loves to comfort the soul. To get the confidence of the heart, He says to the trembling one, Fear not; I am Jesus.

Joseph says again, "Fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

And that is what Jesus says; for we are not only sheltered by His blood, but saved by His life. He will nourish and care for each one all the way along. O my reader, believe Him simply, and never wound His heart again by one single doubt.

God of the Valleys

"Look out for the devil at the foot of the mountain," to quote another. What did he mean by that?

Elijah could tell you. He went up on a mountain, and there he challenged the heathen prophets of Baal. There God showed He was alive by consuming Elijah's sacrifice with fire from heaven. While all the forlorn prophets of Baal watched in chagrin, the miraculous tongues of fire even licked up the water in the trench around the altar!

Few men will experience the thrill of triumph Elijah must have felt as he ran down the mountain, passing King Ahab's chariot in the rain that had come in answer to his prayer. See 1 Kings 18:17-46.

At the bottom of the mountain, however, discouragement came. Queen Jezebel threatened his life, and Elijah hid under a juniper tree, praying to die.

It seems amazing that Elijah would become so upset by Jezebel's threat, after what he had just seen God do. But human emotions are irrational. Discouragement is one of the devil's favorite tools, and often defeats a Christian.

New converts will find the devil waiting at the bottom of their mountaintop experience with temptations, lies, and discouragement.

Satan walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Have you ever seen an intensely hungry lion? I was at the zoo one afternoon at feeding time. The lions were pacing back and forth in their cages, growling. Saliva dripped in long threads as the lions worked their tongues around their mouths, eyeing the zoo visitors. When meat was thrown in by the zoo keeper, they all pounced on it at once.

The devil is as eager to attack you as is a hungry lion. He waits to ambush both the mature Christian, and the new convert at the bottom of the mountain. Often he attacks the mature Christian after a particular victory. He especially loves to get an entire assembly discouraged at the same time. That way, results of blessing soon fade.

Moses found the results of Satan's work when he came down from Mount Sinai after having a tremendous experience with God, and receiving the ten commandments. He found the people had greatly sinned. But Moses did not give up. He knew there were many Israelites who would still serve the Lord, so he persevered in prayer for them.

Christians need to be prepared to fight the lion at the bottom of the mountain, just as Moses did. Moses caused all who were not on the Lord's side to be slain.

Today we cannot solve our problems by slaying individuals who give us trouble. But we can become fully aware that Satan is out to get us, and we can recognize discouragement as the devil's work when it comes. We can obey the scripture, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7).

Often everything looks drab in the valley. Monstrous mountains of despair, worry, and doubt rise to cast their shadows and block our view. Instead of praying to die, as Elijah did, we can begin our fight for victory by counting our blessings and thanking God for what He has already done.

The Lord Jesus Christ promised He would never leave nor forsake us. He is with us, even at the bottom of the mountain. He will help us climb to the heights of joy and gladness. He will give us victory, for He is "God of the valleys" as well as "God of the hills" (1 Kings 20:28).

Gray Hairs: Spiritual Decay

"Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not." Hos. 7:9.

"Sin's hurtful when perceived;

When not perceived 'tis worse;

Unseen or seen it dwells within,

And works by fraud or force."

The gray hairs primarily regard what is national and historical in Israel, and are sadly true to this hour, as seen by their long spiritual decay, of which they are ignorant. The principles involved apply to us.

Gray hairs appropriately mantle the brow of age, and in the way of righteousness are a crown of glory. They tell us that our earthly days are passing away, that the spring time and, it may be, the summer of life are gone. Men vainly seek to alter them, and for a time may seem to succeed. But it is only for a while; the development of artificial color may indeed tamper with the appearance, but cannot arrest the years, the mark of whose fingers lies silvered at the roots. How happy the thought - there need be nothing answering to this in our spiritual life.. Grace is ever above nature. Hence, nature speaks of stones, but grace of lively or living stones. Nature shows how the outward man may, perish, but grace tells of the inward man being renewed day by day.

When God speaks to the heart and tells us what grace is, as with penitent and restored Ephraim, a divine renewal comes, so that away go the gray hairs, the idols, and all the other things that have come between us and God; and we can say, Our "youth is renewed like the eagle's." "He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Oh, what obligation, are we under that we should live to Him who so speaks to Us, and that we should abhor, everything that would grieve Him or draw from Him this tender flow of lamentation - "Gray hairs are here and there" (literally, sprinkled) "upon him, yet he knoweth not." But note, it is evil which these words indicate. It is a moral decay which comes imperceptibly, even as the source is quite unseen. All such decays begin in the inner man. It is in the heart that there is departure from the living God.

It may root, at its beginning, in a want of dependence on God. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." David in all probability was never more satisfied with himself than previous to his sin; and Peter was never more confident with a fleshly confidence than before his fall. The decay sets in before the effects become visible.

Many things will produce it; and first, as reminded by our history, an undue mingling with the world will bring it on. What brought on this decay in Israel was mixing with the heathen, as we may say, mixing with the world. God had told Moses that they were to keep separate. If not, they would intermarry, and if they intermarried they would have introduced among them the gods of those to whom they were married, all which took place till they themselves became "joined to idols." It is the

same now; voluntarily mixing with the world is sure to bring evil. The springs of life become dried up. Could you have a worldly scene and prayer? No! A worldly company and the Word of God- the Savior the theme? No! Could any child of God have the courage of his opinions and be courted by the godless ones of this world? No! Could such a one retain his peace and joy as a child of God? No; he may glide along the current of these new worldly circumstances with a conscience seared as to his sin, like Ephraim. "Gray hairs are... upon him, yet he knoweth not." But he has no peace, no joy.

Second, some sin may cause this decay. It may be a thing, or it may be a person, but it is sin, and it cleaves to us, comes between God and our souls, and is an idol which divides our affections from God. It may be unbelief or a temptation ever seeking to succeed. If either of these be allowed, the result must be decay in the spiritual life.

The idol of our fancy may be something lovely-some habit which has taken the place of God - some attraction or attainment on which pride sits, or some satisfaction of self.

Third, a neglect of the Word will produce it. No one can even slight it without suffering loss. Backsliding most frequently has its beginning here. Decay must come where there is want. Hence, take the nourishment from the newborn babe, and it will die. Can the oldest or strongest live without their necessary food? How, unless fed by the Word, are we fitted for service or trial or conflict with the enemy? When the soul is not fed, we are more fitted for the hospital than the battlefield. The Word is the only true aliment for the soul, made such by the Spirit of God, whose delight is to use it for our own good. "If I would be filled with the Spirit," said the devoted McCheyne, "I must read my Bible more, pray more, and watch more. In the morning I must see the face of God before I see the face of man, or undertake any duty." It is the noblest science to know how to live in hourly communion with God in Christ. Why need we pine in want when the supply is so vast? The Word leads to Christ, Christ to God. Hence the supply is infinite; and, joined to Him, how available it is as well as infinite.

Fourth, neglect of communion brings decay. Are you saying with Job, It is not with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon me? (Job 29:2, 3.) Or with Cowper-

"Where is the blessedness I knew

When first I saw the Lord?"

Confession there may be, but not blessedness, not communion; communion is more than simple prayer. It is that which we enjoy as common between ourselves and God; we speak to God of His grace and righteousness, His holiness and love; He tells us in His Word of the same. We speak to Him of what Christ is - our beloved Savior. He tells us of His beloved Son. It is through His Word by the Spirit that we can enjoy such communion. If it be broken or lost, the result is decay.

How often, alas! may our very feelings tell of this decay. We essay, as in days past, to pray; but, cold and lifeless, we utter words only; we do not pray. Compared with former unction, there is only helplessness. We take up the Word, but where is the quick discernment of the truth we once so sweetly enjoyed? the readiness of soul by which we had only to see or hear in order to receive? It was said by the blessed Lord, that "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isa. 50:4). He was thus of quick understanding, had an aptitude to know and

receive that law of the Lord which was His delight. Truly such an understanding He had, so that He grew in wisdom and in all else that formed His holy and perfect life.

Are there not times when we too, in our measure, have had such an understanding- a mind quick to perceive, and capacity to retain, what we receive of the Word, and to follow the light which it gave? Failing this, and in times of spiritual declension, the spiritual understanding becomes dull, and the mind closed, as if it had come to pass that which is written, "From him shall be taken even that which he hath." Ah, then the state is darkness, when the wild beasts come forth, especially the roaring lion, who goes about seeking whom he may devour. On the other hand, when the soul is restored, He pours into us grace and all good. It will be thus with Israel. It was so with Peter when restored - the love, deep and unchanging, of the Lord filled his heart. David also, and so with us. When iniquity is gone the Lord will give in its place the quick understanding, and a conscience happy and at rest in His presence. But oh, meanwhile, what an anomaly - a child of God under decay! One who is an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ under decay!

The Ground of Peace

The moment we begin to rest our peace on anything in ourselves, we lose it. (And this is why so many saints have not settled peace.) Nothing can be lasting that is not built on God alone. How can you have settled peace? Only by having it in God's own way. By not resting it on anything, even the Spirit's work within yourselves, but on what Christ has done entirely without you. Then you will know peace - conscious unworthiness, but yet peace. In Christ alone God finds that in which He can rest, and so it is with His saints. The more you see the extent and nature of the evil that is within, as well as that without and around, the more you will find that what Jesus is, and what Jesus did, is the only ground at all on which you can rest.

Guidance in Service

The question presents itself: In what manner and to what extent can we expect the direction of God in our work? The answer is analogous to that which we have already given with respect to the intervention of God in order to liberate us, from dangers. We cannot expect visible and sensible interventions; but we can expect with certainty the care and direction of God by His Spirit in the heart if we walk with Him - to be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" - to be led by the Spirit if we walk in humility. (Horn. 8:14; Col. 1:9; see also Psalm 32:8, 9.) I do not doubt that if we walk with God and look to Him, the Spirit will put in our hearts the special things that He wishes us to do. Only it is important that we keep in memory the Word of God, in order that it may be a guard against all our own imaginations; otherwise the Christian who lacks humility will do his own will, often taking it for the Holy Ghost. This is but the deceitful folly of his heart - first, that it knows them; second, taking it for the Holy Ghost. But I repeat, he who looks with humility to the Lord will be conducted by the Lord in the way, and the Holy Ghost who dwells in him will suggest to him the things which He wishes him to do.

The Happy Path

Psalm 1 gives us in brief the conditions under which the saints of God in all ages can tread that happy path of communion and usefulness which is the true aim of all whose hearts are right.

Primarily applicable to the Lord Jesus Himself, we all know this Psalm to be; but, praise be to His name for the grace, He has bidden us follow in the same path. Now that part which deals with the subject we have under consideration (vv. 1-3) falls naturally and simply into three divisions.

The third section, which is also the third verse, presents to us a perfect picture, that is God's picture, of this happy man. He is said to be, first, "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." Could we have a more telling figure of a healthy Christian? Second, it is said of him that "his leaf also shall not wither." If we turn to "Song of Songs" we shall get God's own interpretation of these figures.

In chapter 2, verse 3, the bride, there speaking of her beloved, says, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." We know these words were spoken of the Lord Jesus Himself. And how true it was and is, that He ever bore fruit, and that His leaf was always green. No poor, wearied, hungry one ever sought shelter and refreshment beneath His shade without finding it abundantly. Precious Lord! what springs, indeed, are in Thee!

Beloved reader, if you are a true Christian, does not your heart yearn to do what He did, and to be to His wearied and tempted saints what He is to them? Does not He expect it of our hands? "Comfort ye My people, saith your God." And this Psalm says, happy is the man that does this. Surely it is so. But there is a third thing in this verse that is true of this "blessed" man. "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

What a complete picture of a healthy Christian! Fruit to refresh the hungry, shade to rest the weary, and success in service.

But we must look back at the two first sections to find out the conditions that must be fulfilled in order that we may be thus a help and a blessing; for conditions there are, and attention to them is of the very highest importance.

Verse 1 says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." This happy, useful man is then a separate man. This most important truth is enforced right through Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

Wherever we turn, in all ages and under all circumstances, God's chosen vessels have been separate men or women. The histories of Joseph, Daniel, Paul, Timothy, all teach the same lesson; and, beloved friends, you and I will never be numbered among these happy ones (for happy they were in spite of the sufferings such a path entailed) unless we be clean vessels, "meet for the master's use."

But there is a second condition, for the first one is but a negative condition, after all. It is not sufficient merely to be clear from what is harmful. We need to be built up by what is positively good. So the second condition is, "His delight is in the law of the LORD; and in His law doth he meditate day and night." And then the consequence of these two conditions being fulfilled is what we have above seen in the third verse.

Now, in recapitulating, do we not see how morally perfect this little picture is? You have presented to you a man who diligently avoids evil of all sorts, as diligently finds his delight in the good, and who as a natural consequence is what every earnest, truehearted believer desires to be.

Beloved friends, nothing could be simpler. Of details, we do not get much here. But, broadly, to have before us as our earnest aim the keeping ourselves unspotted from the world, and the constant daily delighting in the precious Word of God, will inevitably result in that happy path of usefulness that brings joy to our own hearts and gives glory to God.

Have Heart

If God honors a man by giving him a great deal of work to do for Him, let him rejoice in it, and not complain; for if he complains, he can very speedily lose his honor. God is at no loss for instruments.

O for a heart to serve Him!-a patient, humble, self-emptied, devoted heart!-a heart ready to serve in company, ready to serve alone-a heart so filled with love to Christ that it will find its joy, its chief joy, in serving Him, let the sphere or character of service be what it may.

Nothing is more dishonoring to God than a manifestation of a complaining spirit on the part of those who belong to Him.

Each one of us has a place to occupy, a ministry to fill, a responsibility to discharge; and you and I are at this moment either promoting the interest of the house of God, the body of Christ, the Church, or helping on the godless schemes of a world stained with the blood of Christ, and the blood of all His martyred saints.

He Is Leading His People

"He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee." Deut. 2:7.

What a journey! What a traveling Companion! Every stage of the 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, leaving ourselves and all our belongings absolutely in His hands; 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.

He Looked — We Look

"He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. 11:10. "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

To the natural man Abraham's action may have appeared foolish indeed. From what may have been a prosperous and comfortable life in Ur of the Chaldees, "he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8). To prefer a nomadic to a settled life; to exchange certainty for apparent uncertainty; to give up all title to citizenship in this world would probably seem altogether inexplicable.

Abraham, however, was in "the secret of the LORD" which "is with them that fear Him" (Psalm 25:14). He had been called by "the God of glory" (Acts 7:2). He had been promised something that was stable and enduring. The secret of his strange step, his simple life, his sincere faith, and his steadfast devotion was, as our text indicates, that "He looked for a city." The city of God was the goal of his soul, and the prospect of reaching that, governed and controlled every detail of his life. He resolutely refused to have anything here. If he must needs have a burying place for his dead, he paid for it; if it was a case of receiving favor from the world, he declined it.

SEPARATION from all that was inimical to the new path characterized him; and even when this involved the separation of Lot from him, he did not deviate from the course upon which he had entered.

It might mean privation, pain of heart, and perplexity as to the next step, but with the city of God in view he went steadily forward. Well content was he to be a stranger and a pilgrim here, to sit loose to everything in this ever-changing world, because "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Now, we look not for a place, but for the Person. "WE LOOK FOR THE Savior" (Phil. 3:20). Called out as was Abraham; called with a "heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1); having to pass through this world to which we no longer belong; with no portion, no place, and no prospect here, "We look for the Savior." He is our treasure, and where He is, our affections, our interests, our hopes, and our desires are all centered. Not only have we not got any place here, but we do not desire any place here, because He is not here. Hence the significance of our last text - "our conversation," or citizenship, or commonwealth "is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior." Our realization of this will at once secure our separation from the world.

SEPARATION follows our apprehension of our heavenly calling, just as surely as day follows night. Observe! It is separation from the world, religiously, socially, politically, and in every shape and form. With such an Object before us, with such a goal to which to reach forward, with such a glorious Person for whom to look, we tread our pilgrim path, well content to be reckoned strangers, esteeming it an honor to suffer reproach, knowing that the end will more than compensate for all the vicissitudes of the journey.

"We look for the Savior."

How this cheers the spirit, warms the heart, and quickens the step. We rise in the morning to plow the fresh furrow of a new day, and we know not what the day may have in store for us; but "We look for the Savior." We lay ourselves down to rest at night, and ruminating on the experiences of the day, we may be sad or glad; but whichever it be, gazing forward, "We look for the Savior," and our hearts rejoice. We have met some dear Christians who are looking for the undertaker; some are looking for a rejuvenated world to follow the death agonies of war - vain hope - "We look for the Savior."

May we reproduce this exquisite passage from a very excellent and trustworthy translation?

"For our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working of the power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself." Phil. 3:20-21; J.N.D. Trans. A new body-like His own. No more pain, dear suffering saint- beyond the reach, the power, and the fear of death; no more death, bereaved fellow believer; no more unlovely ways, for we shall be in all respects like Him. We shall have "a new name," we shall sing "a new song," and we will understand in a very real way the meaning of His announcement, "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

Are we wearied, discouraged, feeling the way long, and the road rough? Are we tempted at times to let the hands hang down, and the knees become feeble? "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Pro. 4:25. "We look for the Savior" - perhaps today. Let us wake in the morning with the glad exclamation on our lips; let us go through the day with this as sweet music in our hearts; let us retire to rest at night with this to smooth our pillow, "WE LOOK FOR THE Savior."

"We 'look' for Thee - Thou wilt arise

Whilst hope her watch is keeping;

Forgotten then in glad surprise,

Shall be our years of weeping.

Our hearts beat high, the dawn is nigh,

That ends our pilgrim story

In Thine eternal glory."

He That Is Holy

Serious evil which has plagued the professing church is the denial of the spotlessness of the humanity of our blessed Lord both in life and in death. The enemy cannot deceive all people with one falsehood, so he has others suited to the temperaments of different individuals. Some who may affirm that the Lord Jesus was God, and that from eternity, may be trapped by heretical teachings which sully the perfection and spotlessness of His manhood; but this is equally blasphemous on the one hand, and destructive to souls on the other; for if He was not absolutely spotless and pure, He could not be the Savior of sinners. Of necessity the substitute must Himself be without any taint of sin whatsoever or He could not stand in the sinner's stead.

On this point Scripture is definite and precise; it says of Him that He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22); and that He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." 1 John 3:5.

As one of our poets has said,

"But spotless, undefiled, and pure,

The great Redeemer stood,

While Satan's fiery darts He bore,

And did resist to blood."

When God gave instructions to the Israelites regarding the passover lamb, He told them that their lamb had to be "without blemish"; that is, it was to be free from any blemish in order to be a type of Him who was truly so; and so we read later that we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19)-without any imperfection or spot of defilement.

Mary was told by the angel Gabriel that "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

And even in the types of the Old Testament, His spotless and perfect humanity is always carefully guarded; for instance, in the book of Leviticus, we have in the first four chapters the four different offerings-the burnt offering, the meat offering, the peace offering, and the sin offering. These present Christ in four different aspects, which we shall not go into here, except to state that the meat offering presents Christ in His life down here as fully consecrated to God-it is His perfect, spotless life - and the sin offering is the presentation of that blessed One in death bearing the sins of others. Now it is precisely in these two points that the enemy has attacked His personal and "relative" purity- in His pathway here as being absolutely without any taint of sin, and on the cross as the victim bearing the sins of others.

In what is said of these two offerings, the Spirit of God has anticipated the enemy's attack and has stated clearly that they are "most holy." It says of the meat offering, "It is a thing most holy of the

offerings of the LORD made by fire" (Lev. 2:3); and "This is the law of the meat offering:... it is most holy, as is the sin offering, and as the trespass offering" (Lev. 6:14, 17). While of course the burnt offering and peace offering were most holy also, it is only of the meat offering, and sin and trespass offerings that it is so stated, thus showing the importance the Holy Spirit attaches to the very truths that would come under attack from the enemy.

These vicious attacks have sometimes come from prominent teachers whom Satan has beguiled, and their error has often been wrapped up in a great show of learning and ambiguous statements. B. W. Newton, for one, would say that He was personally holy, and yet go on to say that because of His connection with Israel He was relatively sinful. O the daring of that statement! Surely if we had to receive that, we would have to say with Mary, "They have taken away my Lord." Neither in Himself, nor in His connection with Adam's race, nor with the nation of Israel, was there any taint of sin whatsoever; He was "most holy."

One of the worst offenders in this heterodox teaching is the Seventh Day Adventist cult. Many people have become ensnared in their evil through reading the literature which is freely offered to the unwary. This literature is most deceptive; the rank attacks on the Person and work of our blessed Lord are obscured in a cloud of talk about the Scriptures themselves. They profess to go by the Word of God, and refer to it freely. They understand nothing of what a Christian is, for they take the place of Jews, and put themselves under the law. Great emphasis is placed on keeping the Sabbath day, but this is only a part of a whole legal entanglement with a past dispensation. It is worse than the Galatian heresy from which we are to stand apart - "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Gal. 5:1.

People are apt to think that the Adventist's talk about keeping Saturday-the Sabbath - is the only difference between them and what might be termed orthodox denominations, but their whole system reeks with error. In reality they deny the deity of Christ, but their special attack is on His holy humanity. They openly charge Him with partaking of a sinful nature with evil tendencies. It is hard to understand how any Christian could read these un-abashed remarks derogatory to their Savior and not burn their literature forthwith; but many have read, and do read, right over these blasphemous statements without a pause. If this doctrine is true, there is no Savior for lost mankind, and we are yet in our sins.

One thing that conceals their sinful teaching is the habit of quoting from such men, who were sound in the faith, as Martin Luther, D. L. Moody, C. Spurgeon, and many others; but what they quote from such men is immaterial to their false doctrine; it is something that does not happen to touch on vital points; but the mention of these names tends to make simple souls think that such writers endorse the whole of the printed matter in hand. Furthermore, seldom is there any mention of "Seventh Day Adventists" on their literature, but rather some simple sounding publishing house; and so, many read this poison without realizing its source. This should be a warning to all Christians to beware what they read. Be sure of the authors and the publishers of all material you read. Do not tamper with poison; the most dangerous poison is the one that is not suspected.

There are many other deadly errors in their system, including the soul-sleeping theory, which is also a denial of the truth of God. There is no such thing in Scripture as the sleep of the soul on the event of death, but rather the plainest teachings possible of the bliss of the departed soul and spirit

who is "with Christ, which is far better," and of the misery of the lost as found in Luke 16.

This system of error also teaches that the lost will be raised and then annihilated. What shall God do to him who alters what He Himself has said? Scripture is abundantly plain as to the eternity of woe for those who die in their sins, and of the wicked with whom the Lord shall deal when He appears in power and glory.

Who can be the author of such a system but Satan when it attributes one of the most necessary aspects of the work of Christ in atonement to the devil himself? (the scapegoat of Leviticus 16). But surely we can expect anything from a doctrine that begins by denying the perfection in manhood and the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not our desire to occupy Christians with error, but rather to emphasize the truth as to the Person and work of our Lord and Savior, while at the same time to point out the insidious attacks made against Him. May God grant us to be true to Himself, and to hold with affection of heart the basic truths of our salvation and of Him who wrought it. Nothing in the whole universe shall ever undermine the Rock on which our faith is built, but tampering with evil will defile us and spoil our joy; and it will damn many souls of the lost who have not sought the truth, but have given an ear to a lie.

All these things remind us of the time that is soon coming when God Himself shall send men a strong delusion to believe a lie, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10).

What a terrible time for those who now despise God's Son, and salvation through Him and His finished work!

His Work Stands Forever

"Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him." Eccles. 3:14.

"For I know that what He doeth

Stands forever, fixed and true;

Nothing can be added to it,

Nothing left for us to do."

How Man Fell: the Garden of Eden

Fallen human nature too plainly speaks on every hand not to have discovered to us the fact that the moment a prohibition comes home to us from the earliest childhood to our latest breath at once is kindled within us the desire for the, very thing which it forbade. A thousand instances and examples might be presented to prove this.

But there was "law" in paradise - before man fell and man was a responsible creature before he broke away from God; he was responsible to obey the law prohibiting his eating the fruits of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil before he became a "transgressor." God had revealed His ways to him, as a Giver, in the largest and widest munificence. Nothing was withheld from man. The ten thousand tributary streams which contributed to his happiness in Eden, stoke of a God who would withhold no good thing. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat," proclaimed the freeness and fullness of no niggard hand. The man was to enjoy it all freely. One small interdict prohibited the eating of the fruit of one tree a tree which marked a responsibility which, when accepted, would only entail evil "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In observing this prohibition he expressed that his will was subject to God who had placed him there, and surrounded him with every creature blessing.

This is the principle of law. An interdict will always prove a will in the person addressed, either subject or insubject to another. The smallest interdict is sufficient for this. It is the way to discover whether another is subject to you or not. If insubject, the authority of that other is refused; and, as a consequence, two wills are opposed, the one to the other; while the man that is tested owns in conscience that God has a right to be obeyed.

Now Satan did not begin by calling attention to the blessedness with which the man had been surrounded, nor to the character of God as giving all things richly to enjoy. Rather does he seize upon the prohibition, calling attention to the interdict alone; "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" whereas God had said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat." The grand master stroke of the serpent was to instill lust into the soul, and distrust of God - to cast a suspicion on the fullness and freeness of His nature to bestow. This was the poison of the serpent which has permeated humanity ever since that day. It was done before ever there was a sin committed. The devil had stepped in and sown distrust in man's heart, creating a suspicion in the soul, and separating man and his Creator by the loss of faith in Him.

This is what men do between each other nowadays to reach some end they have in view. I dare say they do not perhaps think so, but many of the sorrows between men, or even between brethren, are caused by some hint behind backs, or some whispered story to which the hearts of others are ready to lend an ear, which causes distrust to spring up between souls. Distrust engendered, dislike follows, but more especially in the one who has wronged the other. It is exceedingly hard to trust a heart you have wronged. "A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it." Pro. 26:28. "He that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Pro. 17:9). "But he that did

his neighbor wrong thrust him away." (Acts 7:27). These passages (kindred in their character) are but the workings of this principle of evil. Hence the true saying, "The injured may forget; the injurer, never."

To restore man to perfect confidence in God, and to meet the outrage on His nature, was the work of Christ at the "end of the world."

Man then was a responsible creature before he fell. Distrust of God, and lust were instilled into the soul of the woman. Will was put forth against God, and in the case of Adam it was highhanded will (for "Adam was not deceived"; 1 Tim. 2:14), and man fell. A breach as wide as the poles came in at once between God and man- an abyss, impossible to repair or to recross. Man became as "one of Us," said the Lord, "to know good and evil" (Gen. 3:22). This he never can unlearn. He never returns to innocence again.

What then is it "to know good and evil"? It is something which is said of Godhead too - "as one of Us," we read, "to know good and evil." It is to sit in judgment, and pass sentence, on good or evil which we find in our own souls. Of David the king, it was said by the wise woman of Tekoah, "As an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad" (2 Sam. 14:17). This was in reference to the decisions of judgment. This we read of Solomon in 1 Kings 3:9; of Israel in Deuteronomy 1:39; see also Hebrews 5:14.

This is the work of conscience - to take knowledge of the evil practiced by a will opposed to God - to sit in judgment upon it and to condemn - and alas! to apprehend the good, while opposed to it-to approve of it without the power to perform. This was fallen man with a conscience. Responsible before he fell, he distrusted God and transgressed in will His command. He had an ability, even when fallen, to pass sentence upon his own actions by the knowledge of good and evil- good that he had not the power or desire to practice, and evil that he was not able to avoid! Then at last he is driven out of the presence of God, for he had lost his place on such a ground forever. These three things marked his state: distrust of God; sin committed in that distrust; and his place irrecoverably lost. These three things are reversed by the gospel. His confidence is restored by faith in Him as a Savior, his sins removed, which had been committed in distrust; and he is brought into a new place in Christ before Him.

How the Mass of the People Inherited

Josh. 15; 16; 17

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." 1 Cor. 16:13.

Ch. 15:1-15

Judah's lot - the royal tribe, for whom the Lord ordered a royal portion, the noblest and the greatest in Israel - is mentioned first. Judah's inheritance "was placed on elevated ground, that it might be more conspicuous than the others, until the scepter should arise from it." Moreover, in Judah's lot was the seat of the future kingdom-Jerusalem; for, in the ways of God, no lot which He orders is determined save with the definite purpose of bringing glory to His Son. Whether in valleys or in mountains, Judah's cities are numerous, and the detailed account of them marks off this part of the inheritance from the rest of the tribes. The abundance and the fruitfulness of the possession, thus described, teach that God's gifts to His people are marked by their munificence.

Ch. 15:16-19

Caleb's name arising again in the enumeration of Judah's cities, recalls the courage and zeal in possessing in which God delights. Caleb's burning heart for victory fired others. His warrior-soul induced others to great deeds - a grand characteristic which marks the great overcomers for God in all ages. To Othniel, Caleb's nephew, fell Kirjathsepher (the city of books), evidently some seat of learning; and upon its capture, Achsah, Caleb's daughter, became the victor's wife. These cousins were worthy descendants of their race; the one maintained the excellence of the home, the other acquired land from the enemy. Where the springs of water in the home, and the sword abroad, are united - where the wisdom that provides the living waters for the flocks, and the courage which conquers the enemy, abide together, the true spirit of possessing is found. Never should the refreshment so necessary for a sunny southland be forgotten. Waters for the high and the low places should not be neglected, the pastures or vineyards should not be left uncared for, the upper springs and the nether springs must be sought; for the true possessor, practically speaking, of divine blessings, is he who is as careful to cultivate what he has won, as he is brave to conquer what is yet to be possessed. Achsah leaped not from her ass for nothing, requesting gifts of Caleb, her father; and her eager, practical spirit, spiritually speaking, is a lesson to all.

Ch. 15:63

Great as was the lot of Judah, it is melancholy to read at the close of its description, "As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day." And in these words are chronicled the opening of Israel's failure to possess, and the beginning of the history of their loss of liberty. Let spiritual enemies get a stronghold in an individual heart, or among a company of Christians, and sooner or later, as the Jebusites did in David's day-man their walls with maim and blind, and taunt the king (2 Sam. 5:6-10) - so will spiritual enemies defy God's saints.

They "could not drive them out"! The note has been struck, its tone will increase in volume, it will repeat itself again and again, until the sound of victory be swallowed up in the cries of defeat and loss, and in the wails of bondage and ruin.

Ch. 16:1-9

The lot of the children of Joseph came after Judah's, another instance of God's hand so ordering Israel's inheritance that His word to the patriarchs should be fulfilled. The distinctness and the breadth of Judah's lot are absent in the lands and cities portioned to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, and also there is an intermingling of their lots which is difficult to explain. The want of carrying out God's purpose by these tribes is again apparent. "The separate cities... of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh." "And Manasseh had in Issachar and in Asher."

Ch. 16:10

The feebleness of the Ephraimites, as that of their brethren of Judah, is noted; "They drave not out the Canaanites... but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute."

Ch. 17:1-6

With the slackness and want of courage now apparent, it is cheering to read of a warrior having a goodly heritage, "because he was a man of war"; for the family of Machir was brave, and so conquests fell to it; thus the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Machir, acquired their portion according to promise.

Ch. 17:7-13

The cities of Manasseh are next enumerated, and once more the refrain is heard, "Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities... did not utterly drive them out" (vv. 12, 13). "Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute." Their strength exposed the secret of their inability; they "could not," because they would not drive them out; they preferred to make a gain of these heathen rather than obey God. And so it happened that after a time Israel learned all the abominations of the Canaanites, and served them as a punishment for their sins. The shortsighted principle of making terms with the enemy, in disobedience to God, ended in the tributaries becoming thorns in their eyes and pricks in their sides, and at last their masters. When faith in God, with its arduous life, is exchanged for compromise with evil and for a course of self-seeking, the reaping day will discover, by its sorrowful fruits, the bitterness of departing from God.

Putting false things under tribute is a common practice in the Church of God, but trifling with evil will result in eventual ruin and misery. Spiritual foes placed under tribute will, as did these Canaanites, assert their right to rule. Do not we see in Christendom "the rudiments of the world," the commandments and "tradition of men," "worshipping of angels," "philosophy and vain deceit," under tribute? Do not we see Christian men suffering known iniquity in their communities, and allowing in their midst persons and practices which are enemies of God? Winking at evil, pandering to sin, smoothing over the false doctrines or practices of favorite leaders, is but putting the enemy under tribute. Such disloyalty to the Lord ever ends in the tributaries mastering the

people of God and enslaving them.

"The Canaanites would dwell in that land" (v. 12). Decision and purpose are marked here. The saints may fail in earnestness, but the enemy will not fail herein.

Ch. 17:14-18

Having given in all its vividness the secret of their failure, the inspired historian next presents the pretension of the children of Joseph. In them the old man-of-war energy was supplanted by inflation, due to historic memories. The faith in God, which, while making a man nothing in his own eyes, makes him great in his deeds, was exchanged for the I-am-a-great-people doctrine! "Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the LORD hath blessed me hitherto?" Regarded numerically, the Josephites are a "great people" in our own times. We meet with them everywhere. They boast of the holiness and faith of their fathers, or even of their own faith in the bygone old times; ancient victories and a good old history are inscribed upon their banners; and, indeed, so grand and great are they, that their mount Ephraim is "too narrow" for them. Surely they should be accredited, because of what their fathers and their founders were! But the past is passed, and the assumption of present greatness because of bygone victories, but a bubble. Faith in God is faith in the living God, and faith in God means living this day in overcoming power in His name. "If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants." Up, O great people! and prove your words by your deeds; get ye up, O proud boasters in your fathers' faith and deeds, and prove this day your own faith by deeds of hardship and of courage! Cut down the woods, and cultivate the wastes for God; cut down the giants, and free the land from His enemies. Visit the sick, the dying; preach the gospel to the enemies of God; awake from vainglorious dreaming, and arise to the reality of hardship for the Lord. Behold the most difficult places; let them be your points of attack, and cut down for yourself there! Look to yourselves, to your own ways; be no more men of words, but men of deeds for God.

Then the Josephites said, "The hill is not enough for us." Virgin soil and wooded districts sufficed not for them! They wanted the easy and the prepared, as did the Corinthians in their day. These were great enough in words, and grand enough in reigning as kings; but Paul, the Apostle, that great cutter down for himself, reminded them that true greatness measures not itself by itself, but toils on and conquers new regions for the Lord. (2 Cor. 10:12-16.)

These Josephites, so great in words, eschewed the ax and feared the sword, saying, "All the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron." However, Joshua allowed them no departure from their first words. "Thou art a great people," says he, "and hast great power," "the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down." So may we be sure that the Lord Jesus Christ takes us up according to our profession. If we are such wonderful people, so great as we profess, then let us "cut down" for ourselves; if we have so much power, that among the tribes there is none like unto Ephraim, then "thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong."

"Cut down for thyself"! Former victories are not power today. Boasting of the past is but evidence of weakness in the present. "The LORD hath blessed me hitherto" is no proof of the hand of the Lord being with us for blessing today. If the believer be building on the past, he is building on the

blessing, and not on the Lord. Today "cut down for thyself," prove the Lord's might by present faith in Him. The experience of the past is but a motive to encourage ourselves in the Lord today. "Cut down for thyself," "in the land of the... giants"; let their names be Deadness, Indifference, Worldliness, Iniquity, Superstition, Atheism, or what they may be. "Cut down for thyself," ye Josephites of this century.

God's way for His people to enlarge their borders is by driving out the enemies. Aggressive Christianity, the winning of souls, following on to know the Lord, daily victories of faith, alone leads to true possession. Cut down the woods, and plant in the barren places the truths of the gospel; and, instead of lamenting the smallness of the openings for usefulness in our lot, arise, and in God's strength, by sword and ax, cut down the giants and widen the borders.

The Holy Spirit of God has surely for our admonition placed the spirit of Caleb at the beginning, and that of these Josephites at the end of the record of Israel's inheriting Canaan. Are we like Caleb, or like the Josephites? Like the one brave man of war who stood alone for God among his murmuring brethren, or like the multitudes whose name and numbers were their credentials? We may be sure of this, the noble and brave warriors who spend and are spent for Christ, who toil on, day in and day out, patiently praying, earnestly working, grasping the Word, striving for souls, are those whom our Joshua blesses; while the boasters in their traditions and in the memories of their fathers' deeds, receive from Him but these words, Thou art "a great people," then, "cut down for thyself."

Humility Is Precious

"Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5).

An orchid is not more beautiful than a rose. It is prized for its rarity. So humility is precious because it is so seldom found. There is everything that should humble us to the dust. There is every reason why our Lord should be honored. But He was lowly while we are proud. When we humble ourselves, grace runs like a flood to water and refresh our spirits. L. Sheldrake

I Am Christ's

We are in a system where everything turns on fallen man as the main object. That which separates me from it, is the thought that I am Christ's in heaven, chosen in Him before this system I am in had a beginning. This thought gives a great steadiness to the mind in all that we may be passing through. His, and kept by Him in everything, and waiting on Him to see what He will do. If I left my body tonight, I should go straight to Him; and when He leaves the throne to come and take His people home, my body will go too; the dead raised, the living changed, and made like Himself. All to stand around Him - He the center, and they covered with all His beauty. G.V.W.

I Come Quickly

"Surely, I came quickly." These are His last words, and while they die away upon the ear, the Spirit in the Church takes them up and responds, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." O that this were but the language of our hearts! If it were so, how loosely should we sit to the world! How superior to its charms! How should we look down upon all its gilded pageant scenes, yearning indeed in sorrow over the giddy multitude, beguiled by them on the way to death!

It Is the Person

Do you find a great deal in yourself which you cannot find in Christ? The answer is, "He is Lord of all." If when in the world, Christ never had such a care as this or that, why then have you? Lay aside everything that Christ could not be troubled with. Have we any plans of our own? We shall be sure to have trouble. His people should have the mind and thoughts of Him who is going before them in the wilderness; He is, and will be, Lord of all; but there must be a more simple faith in Him as a living Person for today. It will not do to know only of the love of Christ yesterday, tomorrow, and forever; but we need to know it as the love of the living Christ today, who is sitting, at this very time, at the right hand of God in heaven, bearing all His people on His heart, making all our cares through the wilderness His. Unless you realize this, all will be too much for you. He may take from you a great many things which you cannot carry into the glory. How is it that people can leave their souls and their eternity with Christ, but not the things of time? It is from their not realizing Christ as a living Person, occupied with all that concerns them.

Jerusalem and Cyprus

Acts 13:13; 15:38, 39

The four gospels furnish a narrative of the acts of the Lord Jesus Christ; and in the Acts of the Apostles, we have a narrative of the acts of God the Holy Spirit who came down on the day of Pentecost, and has been laboring here ever since. The Lord Jesus acted in His own immediate Person. The Holy Spirit acted in the apostles and others; and in this way we have frequently to bear in mind, as we pass along the inspired missionary record, the infirmity and failure of the various instruments who, though used of God, were in themselves feeble men. Besides, we not only have to take into account the infirmity of man, but also the hostile influence of surrounding circumstances, as used of Satan, for the purpose of hindering the work, and cramping and ensnaring the workmen. Thus, the study of the Acts is most interesting and practical. In it we have men and things, localities and their influences, looked at and presented by the Holy Spirit with direct reference to the great work which He was at that time, and still is, carrying on.

At the close of Acts 12 we read, "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark." In the next chapter we find this same John Mark accompanying Paul and Barnabas on a mission, and continuing with them during their sojourn in the island of Cyprus. However, on leaving there and proceeding to "Perga in Pamphylia," we read that "John departing from them returned to Jerusalem" (chap. 13:13). Home influences as well as religious privileges would no doubt attract the heart of John Mark and induce him to abandon the difficult path of missionary labor. In chapter 12 we read of "the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying."

Here we have two things: the power of natural affection, and the rare spiritual attraction of Christian fellowship. Need we wonder that John Mark vastly preferred a prayer meeting at his mother's house in Jerusalem, to the hardships of a mission in Pamphylia or Pisidia? Ah! my dear reader, the heart is but too well able to understand the preference. There was a vast difference between a comfortable home, regular habits, a mother's love and care, the peaceful charms of well-ordered domestic life, and all the roughness, severity, and hardship of a precarious missionary tour. Furthermore, there was a striking contrast between an assembly of loving and united Christian friends gathered for prayer in the city of Jerusalem, and a synagogue of bigoted Jews at Antioch, or a fickle mob at Lystra.

However, the judgment we form of the actings of John Mark will entirely depend on the point of view from which we contemplate them. In the judgment of mere nature, in its amiability or even in its religiousness, there was nothing reprehensible; but in the judgment of a well-girt, single-eyed servant of Christ, he was all wrong. It is very evident that Barnabas and Paul looked at Mark's conduct from these opposite points. A passage in Acts 15 proves this very clearly. "And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with

them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus." Thus we see that Mark, by yielding to the attractive influences of his home at Jerusalem, not only abandoned the work but also snapped the link between two workmen.

But who was in the right, Paul or Barnabas? The sequel answers. "Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." We hear nothing of Barnabas being recommended to the grace of God, or of his confirming the churches. In fact, his name never again appears in the inspired missionary record. He took his nephew (Col. 4:10) with him, and sailed to Cyprus where, upon his first starting on the Christian course, he had sold his land (Acts 4:36, 37). All this is full of meaning-full of deep and solemn instruction - replete with salutary warning for every one who desires to pursue a path of thorough devotedness to Christ and His service. The voice which it utters is distinctly this: Beware how you allow home influences, nature's soft and enervating attractions, or even spiritual advantages, to draw you off from the stern realities of active labor in the Lord's harvest field. Jerusalem and Cyprus had charms for John Mark and his uncle Barnabas - charms sufficiently powerful to allure them from the side of that ever earnest, ever harnessed, workman Paul.

But some may say, Could not Barnabas and Mark serve the Lord at Jerusalem or Cyprus as well as at Perga or Antioch? Assuredly. Paul himself, as we know, served in both these places. But was it the service of Christ that led Mark back to Jerusalem, or Barnabas back to Cyprus?

This is the question. Let the spiritual reader answer it in the light of the Acts of the Apostles. One thing is plain - they, both traveled out of the current of the Spirit's action, and their names never again appear in the inspired annals of missionary labor. True, they were both children of God and servants of Christ. Barnabas "was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith"; and as to Mark, we find some touching allusions to him in Paul's epistles, which would warrant the conclusion that he had somewhat regained his place in the Apostle's heart. "Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him.)" Col. 4:10. And again, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable unto me for the ministry." 2 Tim. 4:11.

It is also well worthy of notice that the Holy Spirit should have selected Mark as His instrument to write that Gospel which so especially presents Christ as the true Workman-the faithful Minister-the self-denying Servant - the One whom no influence whatever could move a single hair's breadth from the straight line of devotedness to God and His work. Doubtless a more enlarged communion with that only perfect Servant had rendered Mark "profitable... for the ministry," so that Paul could say to his devoted son Timothy, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee." Lovely picture! Precious fruit of divine grace on all sides! The Lord had raised up Timothy to be a faithful yokefellow for Paul, when both Mark and Barnabas had forsaken him; and now Timothy is commanded to take this Mark and bring him -to Paul, as a profitable help in the ministry. Such are the marvelous ways of grace!

O for deeper and more abiding communion with the blessed Master! May we live near to Him! May we drink into His spirit and walk in His footsteps! Then shall we be raised above every influence that would tend to withdraw us from His service, whether that influence arise from Jerusalem or Cyprus. May we be enabled, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to gird on the harness, and go forth in wholehearted devotedness to Christ and His cause! The Lord, in His great mercy, grant it! May we be "profitable... for the ministry," in some small degree! Let us aim at a higher character of devotedness than ever we have exhibited. The Lord is worthy of the supreme place in our heart's affections. If therefore His service calls us to endure hardness, roughness, privation, or trial, let us not sigh after the attractions of Jerusalem or Cyprus. Let neither nature nor earth entangle us, but may our language ever be-

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,

That were an offering far too small.

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my heart, my life, my all."

Jonathan

"And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.... Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." 1 Sam. 18:1, 3, 4.

What an exquisite picture we have here! A picture of love stripping itself to clothe its object. There is a vast difference between Saul and Jonathan in this scene. Saul took David home with him in order to magnify himself by keeping such a one about his person and in his house. But Jonathan stripped himself to clothe David. This was love in one of its charming activities. Jonathan, in common with the many thousands of Israel, had watched with breathless interest, the scene in the valley of Elah. He had seen David go forth single-handed to meet the terrible foe whose height, demeanor, and words had struck terror into the hearts of the people. He had seen that haughty giant laid low by the hand of faith. He participated with all in the splendid victory.

But there was more than this. It was not merely the victory, but the victor, that filled the heart of Jonathan - not merely the work done, but the one who had done it. Jonathan did not rest satisfied with saying, "Thank God, the giant is dead, and we are delivered and may return to our homes and enjoy ourselves." Ah! no; he felt his heart drawn and knit to the person of the conqueror. It was not that he valued the victory less, but he valued the victor more; and hence he found his joy in stripping himself of his robes and his armor in order to put them upon the object of his affection.

Christian reader, there is a lesson here for us - not only a lesson, but a rebuke. How prone we are to be occupied with redemption rather than the Redeemer - with salvation rather than with the Savior! No doubt we should rejoice in our salvation; but should we rest there? Should we not, like Jonathan, seek to strip ourselves in order to magnify the Person of Him who went down into the dust of death for us? Assuredly we should, and all the more because He does not exact aught of us. David did not ask Jonathan for his robe or his sword. Had he done so, it would have robbed the scene of all its charms. But no; it was a purely voluntary act. Jonathan forgot himself and thought only of David. Thus it should be with us and the true David. Love delights to strip itself for its object. "The love of Christ constraineth us." And again, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Phil. 3:7, 8.

O for more of this spirit! May our hearts be drawn out and knit, more and more, to Christ in this day of hollow profession and empty religious formality! May we be so filled with the Holy Ghost that with purpose of heart we may cleave unto our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Joy in God

How much I charge myself for want of joy in God, and I have just come from looking at a scripture that may be able to fix this charge still more home upon the spirit; I mean the opening of Luke. What joy among the angels there! What joy on earth in the vessels filled by the Spirit there! Indeed the one feature of the kingdom of God is "joy in the Holy Ghost." The angels appear together, or alone, as in the person of Gabriel. Witness that fervency of heart and openness of mouth which speaks eloquently the liberty and gladness of the soul. And the style of the filled vessels, whether it be Mary or Elizabeth, Zacharias or Simeon, or the company of shepherds who had been called into the fellowship of angels, equally tells us that all were satisfied; that if in heaven, so on earth, the presence of the power of "the kingdom of God" was expressing itself in "joy."

But let us come on to the fifth chapter, and there we shall find that not only angelic heavenly hosts and filled human vessels enter into this joy, but believing sinners likewise. They show it, and in their way they express it.

Look in this chapter at Peter and his companions, at the healed palsied man, at Levi, and then at all the children of the bride chamber. Peter and his companions are at once able to rise up, leave all, and follow Jesus. The palsied man takes up his bed, and rising up, before them all who stood around him, goes home glorifying God. Levi, at the word of power, abandons what is everything to him in this world, and makes a feast, and such a feast that exposed him to the rebuke of others.

The children of the bride chamber could not fast; they were afresh introduced to the Person in whom the fullness of joy dwells and reigns, and they could not fast; and the Bridegroom approves their joy.

Thus were the poor believing sinners, as in Acts 13, "filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." They take their place with angels and with filled vessels just to prove (it may be each in his different way) that the one feature of the kingdom of God is "joy in the Holy Ghost."

The poor cripple, carrying his bed with praises, is as sure and seasonable an expression of this as the angelic chorus over the fields of Bethlehem. Levi's feast tells this as distinctly as Mary's song or Simeon's oracle. All is joy after its own order and in its own way.

And this is the crowning, eternal thing; there is peace; there is entrance into grace or favor, there is hope, but the crowning experience in the praises of the soul is joy - "Joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:11).

Keep Very Near Him

I intreat you to keep very near to Him, that you may know what there is to be done in His name, that you may be encouraged, and the light of His countenance may sustain your faith. His support is worth all else. J.N.D.

"Nearer, still nearer, while life shall last,
Till all its struggles and trials are past;
Then through eternity ever I'll be,
Nearer, my Saviour, still nearer to Thee."

Learning the Hard Way

D. L. Moody had one of his little girls out for a walk. Someone had made her a present of a muff, and it was cold weather. She was quite delighted. She went out with her father upon the slippery ice, holding both hands in her muff. Her father said to her, "I think you had better let me have your hand, as I am afraid you may fall."

"No, no, I will not fall." So on she went, and down she came.

"I told you you would fall." But she did not happen to hurt herself that time-she was not going to fall any more, so she put both hands back into the muff. Suddenly she fell again, and hurt herself. Her father said, "Now I think you had better let me take your hand." She said, "Yes, papa, take both of them."

When we find out what our weakness is, what poor miserable things we are-what failures we are-and what the Lord undertook for us, to make us fit for His presence, we may well be like the little girl, and say, "Lord, take both of my hands." When we are dependent on Him, He keeps us and preserves us in all our ways, and we glorify Him. Depend upon Him in every step of your path.

Leaving Us an Example: Part 1

"What was it, blessed God,
Led Thee to give Thy Son,
To yield Thy well-beloved
For us by sin undone?

'Twas love unbounded led Thee thus To give Thy well-beloved for us."

#155, L.F.

There is a remarkable verse in the 2nd chapter of 1 Peter (v. 21). I am reading a part of the verse: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example." Perhaps we will turn to several scriptures this afternoon if the time does not slip by too rapidly. In our meditations in the readings that we have been having in Philippians, we were reminded that we are to "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." That is very practical, isn't it?

Part of the mind that was in Christ Jesus, we have in this verse. He was minded to suffer for us, and in so doing He left us an example. One thinks we should stress this kind of thing, as we find it in other portions of the Word; that is, the spending of ourselves for the sake of that which is dear to the heart of Christ. "Christ... loved the church, and gave Himself for it." "Christ... suffered for us, leaving us an example." He loved the Church, and He gave Himself for it. We want to weigh that expression. We want to seek, if we can, to have it stand out before us clearly- the love of Christ for the Church, and our privilege of being imitators of Him in the manifestation of that love to the Church-the Church so dear to His heart.

Our first illustration we will take from the 32nd of Exodus. For the sake of brevity we will not read this long chapter. A resume of it is something like this: Moses is called of God into the mount of God to receive at the hand of God the law. He is there forty days and nights, and in the meantime, down on the plain below, are the children of Israel. They wait for Moses to come back. Growing weary of the delay, they say, in substance, "As for this Moses, we don't know what is become of him. Let us order our lives as though he were never coming back. Let us make our own gods." They lost confidence in Moses because he was unseen. He was hidden there in the mount. Now Moses was a type of Christ, and the tendency in our hearts is, that as our Lord tarries, if I may use that expression, as our Lord waits for the moment of His return, we are apt to become lax; and one of the first signs of that letting down is that we become careless in our affections toward the Church of God.

Remember in the passage in Luke's Gospel where our Lord speaks of the servant who says down in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming," immediately he begins to eat and drink with the drunken, and to beat the menservants and the maidens. His attitude changes the moment he relinquishes the hope of the near return of his lord. There is nothing that keeps our steps ordered

in the path of holiness more than constantly keeping before us the fact that before the day is over, before the sun rises on the morrow, we may be called home to be with our blessed Lord. That moment will wipe out all the difficulties of the journey, all the trials that are ours in our family, in our work, and in the assembly.

Growing weary waiting for Moses, they made them a golden calf. Moses came back and found them engaged in a carnal worship. They weren't up to spiritual worship. They had dropped down to the plane of carnality. Moses, the man of God, filled with zeal, breaks those tables of stone, comes into the camp, and sees the execution of the judgment of God upon the guilty rebels. Where the glory of God is at stake, the honor of His name, God Himself deals severely. So it is that the Son of man in the midst of the golden candlesticks in the 2nd and 3rd of Revelation views the churches with a scrutiny that is pure and that is true: "Holiness becometh Thine house, O LORD, forever."

Moses put the tribe of Levi to a severe test; they were to take the sword and go in and out and slay their own flesh and blood. Yes, beloved, loyalty to God comes first. Look at the 14th of Luke, verse 26: "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." Is that severe? Remember, those are the words of the blessed Lord Himself. He demands allegiance above every earthly tie. So in the 32nd of Exodus, end of the 27th verse: "Go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor." 28th verse: "And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." Moses didn't cover up their sins; no, he did not; but in the rest of this chapter, beloved (and that is what I had before me), there is something exceedingly lovely.

30th verse: "And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." He didn't soften their sin. He didn't mitigate their guilt: "And now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." Oh, the love in his heart for those poor, sinful people! He is not going up into the mount of God to entreat against them. He is going up into the mount of God to entreat for them.

31st verse: "And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin." He didn't minimize the sin. They had sinned greatly. They had made them gods of gold. 32nd verse: "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin-;" and then he stops. Eventually it sweeps over his soul -oh, how can He forgive a sin like that? How can He? And then this great man of God throws himself into the breach and says, "If not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written."

Ah, brethren, how much do we know about a spirit like that? Moses bears the whole guilty race on his heart before God. He pleads for God's forgiveness for them. "Oh," he said in substance, "forgive them, and if not, blot me out of your book." How he identified himself with their sin, with their awful condition before God! Now our blessed Lord Jesus was in a position where there was no "peradventure." When He went up the slope of Calvary to intercede for us, to die for us, there was no "peradventure" there, for He bared Himself to the wrath of God, and He did what Moses couldn't do. He took the wrath on His own Person and stayed the storm of God's judgment-the

waves and billows beat upon Him, and we go free! Moses had a heart like the heart of Christ; he wasn't in a position to do what Christ did, but he had a heart that was filled with that kind of a longing.

Yes, brethren, Christ died for us, leaving us an example. How dear to our hearts are the people of God?

In the next chapter, down toward the end, 12th verse: "And Moses said unto the LORD, See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. Yet Thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight." 13th verse: "Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight: and consider that this nation is Thy people." Isn't that grand? He is casting that people back upon God, so he reminds God that they are His people. That is faith, beloved.

14th verse: "And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." 15th verse: "And he said unto Him, If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." Moses is determined to connect the people of God with God Himself. His attitude is, "We can't go up without Thee." So he insisted that God should acknowledge that link with his people. 16th verse: "For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy people [Moses doesn't say my people, but Thy people] from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." How can God resist pleading like that? God delights to hear a man bear on his heart the burden of the people of God. Many characters in Scripture have done it, not only Moses. Daniel did it. Nehemiah did it. Oh, yes. Many a servant has borne on his heart the burden of the people of God.

17th verse: "And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in My sight." If I may say it reverently, God capitulates, God gives in. He can't stand out before pleading like that. Not one grain of self was in that petition of Moses'. It was God's people he was thinking about-not himself.

Ah, beloved, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who... made Himself of no reputation." Why did He do it? For you and for me. "Christ... loved the church." He died for it-left us an example. What do we know about giving ourselves for the Church of God?

Shall we go, for another example, to 1 Chron. 21:1- "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." 7th verse: "And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He smote Israel." 8th verse: "And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech Thee, do away the iniquity of Thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." We will notice a few things here. Satan was the one that thought up this scheme to get David to number the people, and David lent himself to the devil as a tool well fitted to the devil's hand. Someone might say, "Well, if Satan moved him to do it, he couldn't help himself." Oh, nothing of the kind! Satan knew before he ever moved David to number his people that David was in an attitude of pride of heart that made him easy prey. All that Satan had to do was whisper the suggestion into his ear, and David was in a state of soul that caused him to give in immediately. So he ordered the people numbered.

David had a nephew by the name of Joab, a clever man of the world, an unsaved man, but a man experienced in reading human character—a clever politician, and quite a general. That man of the world sensed that David his king was making a blunder. Brethren, isn't it a sad thing that we children of God, when we get out of communion, can do such stupid things that worldlings can see it and rebuke us for it? A child of God out of communion seems more stupid than a worldling, and so Joab rebuked David for his folly, but he went ahead just the same.

Self-will is an awful thing. Oh, it has wrecked multitudes of God's people. David went ahead and numbered the people; he got his way. When the whole thing was over, and he had what he thought would make him happy, how did he feel about it? Oh, his conscience smote him!

Why is David called the man after God's own heart? I believe it is for this reason: that David had a conscience that was operative, and when he sinned he was willing to admit it one hundred per cent. When he made his confession there were no conditions attached to it—I have sinned. I have done very foolishly. I offer no excuse. That is a man after God's own heart.

Now if you are to see a contrast with this, look at Saul. Saul sinned, and the prophet came to him and pointed his sin right in his face. What did Saul say? "I have sinned," and what was the next thing? "Honor me now... before the elders of my people." Oh, the shallowness, the hypocrisy of it all! What is the difference? His language was almost word for word the language of David. What was the difference? One man was exposed before the eyes of God, and conscience was at work; and he was smitten in contrition before his God. The language of David on another occasion was, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." Psa. 51:4. How was it with Saul? Saul was sorry that he was caught. He was found out. But the only thing that concerned Saul was, "Honor me now... before... my people." About whom was he thinking? He was thinking of Saul. All his thoughts revolve around Saul.

Now let us see how it was with this dear man of God. 13th verse: "And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me now fall into the hand of the LORD; for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man." Oh, that dear saint knew the heart of his Lord. The evil servant in the gospels, when brought to account, said, "I knew thee that thou art a hard man." He didn't know the heart of his lord. "Very great are His mercies." The Lord sent pestilence upon Israel, and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. One of the saddest things I know about is that when a saint of God gets away from God, gets into sin, he oftentimes drags with him into the path of sin, corruption, sorrow, and suffering many others of God's dear people. That is one of the tragic things about it. When you and I miss the path and go wrong, the likelihood is that we are going to lead somebody else.

In the last chapter of John's Gospel, Peter went back to his fishing. The Lord had called him away from that occupation, but the yearning for that old trade comes back, and he says, "I go a fishing"; and he took six men with him. Ah, yes. He took six men with him into a fruitless night of toil. All night, yet they took nothing. When we go wrong, we take others with us into a fruitless departure. How sad!

17th verse: "And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let Thine hand, I pray Thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on Thy

people, that they should be plagued." O brethren, there is something majestic in that prayer. What a clean, blessed confession it is-I have done the sinning. I am the one that is guilty. He doesn't lay the blame on Satan. He doesn't say, "The devil made me do it, and I couldn't help myself." He says, "I have sinned... but as for these sheep, what have they done?" Oh, that is the heart of Christ!

Leaving Us an Example: Part 2

You remember, beloved, when our Lord made that last march to Jerusalem, the mob came out for Him with lanterns and staves. Judas in the front betrays Him with his kiss. Our Lord said, "If... ye seek Me, let these go their way." The heart of Christ would spare His own. He would throw Himself into the breach. So, dear saints, if you and I have God's thoughts about the Church, we will set aside every vestige of self-self-importance, self-interest-and we will say, "O God, let the thing fall on me, but spare Thy people." Thy people! Oh, we will have the heart of Christ about the Church.

For the next example, I wish to turn to the 3rd of 1 Kings. Solomon had ascended the throne, and God had tested Solomon by saying to him, "Ask what I shall give thee." Solomon made a noble request. He said, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in"-he asked for wisdom. God was pleased with that request because he hadn't asked for riches, he hadn't asked for fame, but for wisdom. So God said, in substance, "I am going to give you wisdom, and I am going to give you the riches too." Thus Solomon became, I suppose, the wisest man that ever lived. Then the very next thing is that God tests his wisdom. That is the part of the chapter we want to read.

"And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we were together; there was no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house. And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it. And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom.

And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear. And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son. And this said, No; but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son. Thus they spake before the king. Then said the king, The one saith, This is my son that liveth, and thy son is the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son is the dead, and my son is the living. And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof."

Now let us think of that for a few minutes. It is one of the most remarkable incidents in all the Old Testament, familiar to the most of us here in this room. There was a woman who had no real interest in this infant. It wasn't her child. Her heart was cold, unfeeling, unsympathetic. She was moved by two of the cruelest motives of which the human heart knows anything-jealousy and envy. She had lost her own child, but the second woman still possessed her offspring. She stole the babe, but when she saw that she couldn't have her way, she was willing to have the other's babe divided by the sword of Solomon. She was willing to stand there and see that little body

severed and its life taken, rather than be defeated in her own willfulness. This put the true mother to the test, and out of the depth of her heart's affection she cried, "Give her the living child"! Yes. It was the heart of a mother yearning over that that was dear to her. The other woman said, "Divide" it.

God is here teaching us the difference between pretended and real affection. He allows this test case to come before the throne of Solomon that He might vividly demonstrate the essential distinction between genuine and feigned love.

This false claimant, the woman whose the child was not, was brusquely willing that the child be severed. This cruel possibility discovered the true mother's heart. She would give up her all, that the object of her love be not divided. Brethren, this incident is marvelously appropriate to the theme of our meditation here this afternoon.

Let us apply this. Suppose a question comes up that is threatening to divide the Church of God, to divide and scatter that which is dear to the heart of Christ. The one who is away from God, the one who is out of tune with the mind of God, will say, "Use the sword; divide the saints. I want my way, and if I can't have my way, use the sword; split the saints, I don't care." But oh, God would have us to be like the true mother. She was willing to throw herself into the breach rather than see that child divided, for her affections toward it were genuine.

Christ died for us. He left us an example. "Christ... loved the church, and gave Himself for it." O dear saints of God, are we in tune with the heart of Christ about His Church? Are we? You know, the dear Apostle Paul said, when writing to the Thessalonians, "We live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." What did he mean? He virtually said, "My life and happiness are wrapped up with seeing the saints of God go on in the truth." Isn't that lovely? In the 12th chapter of 2 Corinthians he says (v. 15), "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." Oh, that is the heart of Christ. Do you and I yearn over the Church of God like that? Paul did. Paul's welfare, his happiness, his life, all were bound up with the prosperity of the Church of God.

Then in the 20th of Acts, on his last interview with the Ephesian elders, he looks down through the vista of the future and sees divisions coming into the Church of God. Was it a light thing? Did he treat it carelessly? He says, "I ceased not to warn every one of you night and day with tears"-with tears! Ah, he wept over it. The Church was dear to him because it was dear to the heart of Christ.

Let us turn to the 3rd chapter of John's 1st epistle, verse 14: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." 15th verse: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." 16th verse: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." There is the standard. We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren; yet, as you look back over the sad history of the Church of God, it is the story of Acts 20. It is men arising, seeking a following, seeking to establish themselves, seeking their own way. Such have divided the saints. They have divided the flock of God. How does the heart of Christ feel toward a spirit like that?

One thinks back on the history of gathered saints, when a brother in the meeting was beginning to teach something that distressed his brethren. His brethren admonished him on the ground that his

projected course was threatening the peace and unity of the saints. But all expostulations were of no avail. He pursued his willful course and split the Church of God. To apply our illustration above, Was that the heart of the true mother of the child? No, that is the cry of the other woman, Let the sword "divide." Why? Because the man would rather have his way and have the Church of God divided than surrender his will that the Church of God might be preserved. How does that sound in keeping with this verse: "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"?

Look at the last chapter of Romans, verse 3: "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus"; verse 4: "Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." Ah, there is a lovely spirit. Here is a man and his wife who are carrying out the admonition that we read in John's epistle, "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." The man and his wife had laid down their very necks for the sake of dear Paul, and so he says, as it were, "I give thanks for them, and every other church gives thanks for them."

As I stand here, I think of a dear man and his wife whom I have known for nearly forty years. God in His providence has seen fit to place them in different assemblies over the country, and everywhere they have lived, the saints have thanked God for them. O beloved saints of God, isn't that the heart of Christ? "Not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." I will tell you something else, and you know it is true. There are certain brethren that if we heard they were coming to live where we do and be in our little meeting, oh, we would draw a sigh; we would feel sad. Why? Because what characterizes them is that they trouble the children of God, and distress the saints. They are a burden, a care, a stumbling block.

Beloved, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren! If it is something that concerns me, I ought to put myself in the dust rather than stumble my brethren! rather than divide them, rather than scatter the people of Christ. Ah, far better! far better! Is it not true that if we have the mind of Christ we would rather be taken home to glory today than be left here to scatter and distress the flock of God? Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Are we willing to sacrifice ourselves-not someone else, but ourselves?

"Who... made Himself of no reputation"-no reputation! If my brethren come to me and say, "Brother, the course you are on is distressing your brethren; it is leading to disaster. We warn you, we beseech you." Brethren, if I have the heart of Christ, what will I do? If I have the heart of Christ, I will humble myself in the dust. Indeed I will. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.

We don't realize how dear the Church is to Christ. God hates division. He is not the author of confusion. He hates the scattering of the sheep of Christ. Oh, someone says, there must be divisions that they that are approved may be made manifest. Yes, there had to be a Judas, that is true, but it had been better for that man had he never been born. God in His wisdom may find it necessary to let a sifting come in, but woe to the man that brings it in, regardless of who he may be.

Oh, may God keep us, give us the heart of Christ. Brethren, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, for the Church of God. Oh, let us be in communion with the mind of Christ!

"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.
"Bless, bless the Conqueror slain,
Slain in His victory;
Who lived, who died, who lives again-
For thee, His Church, for thee!"

Let Us Be Reflectors

As Paul walked, the light shone. He was the reflector of his Lord in his walk. There was that cheeriness which is the result of always finding God's side of everything. Whatever the failure or sorrow, his heart just turned up to Christ. What a blessed tone he must have given to any company he was in, just seeing the lack, and bringing what would meet it in the power of enjoyed communion with the Lord, and so making other hearts bright. Do not we see this in some? No cloud over the heart-ever bright and cheery-because they look simply to Christ, seeking to reflect Christ. We may do the same, beloved.

The Letter "L"

"Just one letter of the alphabet makes all the difference between us now," said a recently converted young woman to an unsaved neighbor who could not understand the great change that had come over her.

"You love the WORLD, and I love the WORD."

How much there was in this simple way of putting it! The Word speaks of Christ, so the true Christian loves it. The world cast Christ out, yet the worldling still loves it.

The Lord Jesus Christ: Object of Affection and Sympathy

The touching story of Mary Magdalene in John 20 is familiar to almost everyone. It is a striking instance of ignorant, yet genuine affection. She might have known of His glorious resurrection. She ought to have remembered His words, "After three days I will rise again." But though her faith and intelligence were defective, her heart beat true to its object and her treasure. Contrast her with Peter and John, and does she not stand on a platform far above them? They can return to their home, satisfied that Jesus' body was not in the tomb, though they knew not where He was. This was not enough for Mary; her loyal heart pants to know where He is, and finding Him not, is ready to break with grief. She stands without at the sepulcher weeping, stooping to gaze at the spot where they laid Him. Unperturbed by the angels, disconcerted in no wise, there she lingers, and there her heart must be -beautiful instance of genuine though ignorant affection, and the amazing power of one object when the affections are governed thereby. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.... Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

How was she rewarded? Most surely according to the desires of her heart toward Himself. First, He allows her to hear her own name on His risen lips. Wonderful moment for Mary! Wonderful moment for Jesus! Was not every pulsation of her devoted heart met, and more than satisfied, when His blessed voice caused her to look into His face, her Master and her Lord? I am bold to say that two hearts were made glad that daybreak - hers who could find no home where He was not, and His who gave His life for worthless rebels like us. And I am bold to say further that it gave Him greater joy to own her as His sheep, calling her by name, Mary! than it did to be so owned and called.

But this was not all, for He commissions her now to carry the most wonderful message ever entrusted to human lips (see v. 17) -"Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." He sends her forth to proclaim the victory of His love, not only that He had triumphed so gloriously, that every enemy was under His feet, but that He, the risen Man, was Head of a new race, that "both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren." Heb. 2:11, 12. He sends her forth out of the second garden where the mournful history of the first garden (Eden) had been more than wiped out by the glories of His triumph, to say to poor trembling hearts like ours, that He Himself had not only won a new place for them, but that He had positively brought them into it in Himself: "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one," which does not mean that He was degraded to their level, but that He, by His death, His glorious triumph and victory, had elevated them to the heights of His own new place before His Father and God.

What grace! wondrous grace! He passes by angels that excel in strength, and comes down to a poor, weak woman upon earth, owns her as His sheep, and then sends her forth to wipe the tearful eyes and comfort the trembling hearts of His own by announcing unto them the conquests

of His love. Who can say now that Jesus does not delight to reward the devoted heart? And who can deny that in thus rewarding it, He gratifies His own changeless affections?

Let us now turn to Mark 14. It is the only instance recorded in Scripture of anyone having intelligent sympathy with Christ; it is a wonderful scene; everyone is thinking of death. Jesus has the vision of death before His spirit. How must the Passover, with its lamb whose blood was shed, have brought death before every mind? There were the type and the antitype face to face, as it were; the chief priests and scribes, with a hatred to Christ which nothing but His death could appease, were there seeking how they might take Him by craft and put Him to death. Thus we see how death filled all thoughts; but there was present one, Mary of Bethany, whose heart kept company with all that was passing through His; she alone was in full sympathy with His feelings at the moment, and entered into the thoughts of God concerning the beloved Son.

It has been remarked that the account which Mark furnishes us, of the close of His blessed mission of love, presents Jesus more solitary in it than any other; incidents and circumstances, which are recorded more or less in all the other gospels, are absent from Mark. If this be so, how strikingly significant is the record of this act of Mary's in the house of Simon the leper! Her heart and her affections, in true and genuine sympathy, traversing with Him the dreariness and loneliness of His path, as well as marking her sense of the utter worthlessness of all around in view of His agony and death; on one side intelligently apprehending not only who and what He was in Himself, but likewise His value in the eyes of His Father; on the other, making use of His tomb as a burying place for every valuable thing of hers on earth. For her, if Jesus dies, He carries all of hers down into the grave with Himself!

In Matthew and Mark, the blessed Lord is consciously in man's hand, in the closing hours of His life. This indeed characterizes these gospels in their records of His death, His cross, which was both the fruit of the counsel of God in view of redemption, as well as the fruit of Jewish enmity, and man's revolted, reprobate heart. How blessed it is then to see Mary here at such a moment marking her sense of the glories of His Person in the face of the accumulated hatred of both devil and man! It is a blessed sight, in the intelligent apprehension of faith- the homage of one willing, loving heart, thus laid at His feet - one solitary soul in that rebellious land owning Him Lord of all. All this sheds its light on His own words - "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

Let us now look at the facts, as they are here recorded, a little more in detail. Mary's affection, her intelligent sympathy, takes precedence over the treachery of Judas. Her love to Jesus was of that order and character that it secured for Him that which was suitable to Himself at such a moment, and that which entirely met His heart and thoughts. The "box of ointment of spikenard very precious," answered to all that was around Jesus, in the hatred and malignity of man, in that hour; but it also coincided with all that filled His soul; and it was, as well, community of thought with the Father concerning the Son of His bosom. It is a sight of surpassing blessedness to gaze at Him as He sits there - to see Him accepting and vindicating too, the affection and sympathy which His own Person had created and called forth-to see her too, fruit as she was of His grace, expending on Him to whom she owed her all, that all. Mary, as it were, says by this action of hers, "While the King sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof."

There is another point of solemn interest in this affecting scene; namely, how opposite the thoughts of men are to what suits the mind of God and His Christ; the most that some could say concerning Mary's act was that it was marked by waste. Oh, how little was He in their eyes, who measured the service rendered to Him after this fashion! For it is the person to whom the service is rendered, that is the true measure of its value. Jesus, the eternal Son of the Father; Jesus, the spotless and perfect Son of God; Jesus, the willing and ready friend of need, and want, and sorrow, stood so low in their estimate, as to call forth the expression of waste in regard to that which was voluntarily expended upon Him. It is the same today; the present is but the offspring of the past; the family character is not wanting in either; the heirloom of indifference to God's Christ, and no sense of who He is or what He is, passes on from generation to generation; and today, with all its boasted light, superiority, and advance, the poor, the perishing, the destitute, and the oppressed, have their friends and allies; but Jesus, the precious, blessed, wondrous Savior, is forgotten and neglected - only remembered to be slighted and despised.

There is a bright spot in this dark cloud; turn your eye upon it for a moment; Jesus vindicates her. How blessed! The eye under which this act was performed discerned its value, and the heart that had caused to spring up affections so suited to Himself her Lord, measures out its appreciation of all that was expended on Himself; and He lets everyone know what He felt and thought of this manifestation of her devotedness to His Person. "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on Me.... She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Oh, the joy of being vindicated by Jesus, and the satisfaction of knowing that, however feebly, we have truly ministered to the longings of His heart!

The Lord give His saints in these last days more genuine affection for, and true sympathy with, our Lord Jesus Christ and His interests, that nothing may be able to divert their hearts from Him, engage their powers but Him, satisfy their souls but Him!

The Love of Jesus

In looking at Rev. 1:5, 6, we can trace the following actings of love: first, love thinks of its objects. This marks the motive in operation to be unaffectedly pure, for when the heart regulates itself by meditating on its object, it seeks not to be noticed, to be praised, or exalted for thinking of its object; its reward is found in the very thought itself-a reward, a pleasure with which nothing can compare.

Second, love visits its object. It could not be content with merely thinking; the same principle that leads love to think with pleasure, induces it to visit its object; and, moreover, we can trace the same purity, elevation, and disinterestedness in the visit as in the thought. It does not think upon its object in order to please or attract the attention of anyone; neither does it visit in order to effect such ends; it has its own real substantial enjoyment, both in thinking of and visiting its object.

Third, love suffers for its object. It rests not satisfied with merely thinking of or visiting its object - it must suffer. In order to exhibit itself in all its reality and intensity, love must put itself to cost for its object; it must spend and be spent, not because it expects a return, but simply because it will express itself in a way not to be mistaken. Love never thinks of what it may reap for itself in thus suffering. No; it simply contemplates its object in thinking of, visiting, and suffering for it.

Fourth, love exalts its object. This is the highest point. In the exaltation of its object, love sees the point of previous thought, visitation, and suffering. Hence, love feels exquisite happiness in exalting its object, for in so doing it reaps the wished-for harvest.

Let us now apply the above blessed characteristics of love, to the Lord Jesus, and see how His love exhibited all of them. Did not He ponder in His own eternal mind His much-loved Church before the foundation of the world? Yes, truly; "His gracious eye surveyed us ere stars were seen above." Did He rest satisfied with merely thinking about us? No; He laid aside all His glory; He came down into this cold, heartless world, as into a vast quarry, from whence He hoped to hew out stones for the temple. He made His way down into this "rough valley" of ours, which had been "neither eared nor sown." "The dayspring from on high hath visited us"; but He did not rest satisfied with coming down to look at us in our misery and degradation; He determined to suffer for us, to die for us - He has washed us in "His own blood," which marks the intensity of His suffering for us. What then was all this for? Why those ineffable sufferings of Jesus? Why the groans and bloody sweat in the garden? Why the mysterious hours of profound darkness, together with the cry, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"-that the love of Jesus might exalt its object. And He has exalted His object to the highest point of elevation. He "hath made us kings and priests unto God."

Thus we have seen how the love of Jesus thought of, visited, suffered for, and exalted its object; this is for our comfort. But then we should remember that if we love Jesus, we too will often like to think of Him, to contemplate His grace, ponder over His perfections; moreover, we will pay frequent visits to the secret of His sanctuary, not to gain a name as persons of much prayer, but simply to indulge the desires of our hearts after Him who is "the chiefest among ten thousand" and

"altogether lovely." Again, we shall be ready to suffer for Him, not in order to commend ourselves to our brethren as persons of great energy and zeal, but to express the high estimation in which we hold His blessed Person. Finally, it will be our constant effort to exalt Him in every place; our constant cry will be, "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together." Let us earnestly pray for such a deep tide of divine love in our poor, cold, narrow, selfish hearts, as will make our service not the mere spirit of imperfect zeal, kindled by the unhallowed spark of human opinion, but the calm, steady, constant flow of unalterable affection for the Lord Jesus- the affection which has its primary joy in pondering over its object, ere it comes forth as an actor or a sufferer in His cause.

"Come, saints, praise the Lamb, His mercies proclaim,
And lift up your heads and sing of His name,
His love to the Church, which He purchased with blood,
To make her His bride and the temple of God."

Mary at the Sepulcher: Genuine Affection

In John 20 we have a scriptural illustration of affection for Christ; Mary Magdalene came early when it was yet dark to the sepulcher; she did not wait for sunrise, but while nature was still shrouded in darkness, her affection hastens her to the only spot on earth that had any interest for her - the grave of her Lord. Oh, what a character this stamps upon the earth; it was the grave of Jesus! Beloved reader, has it this character to you?

Now observe, the Person of the blessed Lord was engaging the affections of the heart of Mary; and hence, how could she domicile where He was not?

Not so Peter and John; having satisfied themselves that the sepulcher was empty, having carefully examined the empty grave, and seen the garments of death left behind by the mighty Conqueror who had risen out of them, they return to their own home.

But look at Mary; she has no home; and in more senses than one did this devoted woman stand "without"; for, not finding her Lord, she was truly without home, or cheer, or solace in her sorrow, a brokenhearted woman whom none could comfort; and yet it is a lovely sight, to see her in all her genuine personal love for Christ, standing, weeping, stooping down, and looking into His grave!

Ah! is not this rare-the spirit of it I mean-in these days? If I were asked what is the characteristic feature of the present time, what should I say? If I spoke the truth, I should say, HEARTLESSNESS AS TOUCHING CHRIST. Is it nothing to you, beloved reader, that Christ is rejected and cast out by man? Oh, is it not very little thought of, and lightly esteemed? The absence of affection accounts for the little loyalty there is to the Lord Jesus. How few hearts are really true to Him! It is not possible to drill them into it, and mere knowledge cannot secure it. There is no lack of information as to Christ and His interests; yet it is a dry, cold thing, because it is not Christ. The question for the moment is, "What think ye of Christ?"

Another truth of exceeding beauty may be seen here; namely, how genuine affection gauges everything - measures everything. To Him who she thought was t h e gardener, she says, "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." Observe, she does not say who it is, but "Him" - gauging everyone's thoughts by her own, and as she was full of Him in her thoughts, supposing everyone else was like herself. Alas, how little of this we find in ourselves or around us!

But observe too how her affection was the gauge of her ability - "I will take Him away." If she had reasoned or calculated, she might well have hesitated ere she proposed such a task; but affection never calculates; its power or ability is itself.

And now the moment has arrived for Jesus to make Himself known. What a moment for Him - for her! He fulfills John 10, and "calleth His own sheep by name," and she answers to John 10, "The sheep hear His voice." He gives her to hear her name from His very own lips - Mary!

What a scene it is! The history of the first garden, its blight and sin, all reversed. The history of the first garden, with a fallen man and woman driven out by the hand of God, is closed at the cross of Jesus; and here in this second garden we find a risen Man and a redeemed woman whose affection for His Person the blessed Lord appreciates at such worth that He commissions her to be the bearer, to His disciples, of the most wonderful tidings that human lips ever announced. "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God."

May the Lord awaken in the hearts of His people more wholehearted devotedness, at all cost, to His Person, honor, and interests!

Matthew 11:28-30

It is a great thing always to submit ourselves meekly under the hand of God. We are sure to reap a rich harvest of blessing from the exercise. It is really taking the yoke of Christ upon us, which, as He Himself assures us, is the true secret of rest. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

What was this yoke? It was absolute and complete subjection to the Father's will. This we see, in perfection, in our adorable Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He could say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Here was the point with Him. "Good in Thy sight." This settled everything. Was His testimony rejected? Did He seem to labor in vain, and spend His strength for naught and in vain? What then? "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." It was all right. Whatever pleased the Father, pleased Him. He never had a thought or wish that was not in perfect consonance with the will of God. Hence He, as a man, ever enjoyed perfect rest. He rested in the divine counsels and purposes. The current of His peace was unruffled from first to last.

This was the yoke of Christ; and this is what He, in His infinite grace, invites us to take upon us, in order that we may find rest to our souls. Let us mark, and seek to understand the words, "Ye shall find rest." We must not confound the "rest" which He gives with the "rest" which we find. When the weary, burdened, heavy laden soul comes to Jesus in simple faith, He gives rest, settled rest, the rest which flows from the full assurance that all is done; sins forever put away; perfect righteousness accomplished, revealed, and possessed; every question divinely and eternally settled; God glorified; Satan silenced; conscience at rest.

Such is the rest which Jesus gives, when we come to Him. But then we have to move through the scenes and circumstances of our daily life. There are trials, difficulties, exercises, buffetings, disappointments, and reverses of all sorts. None of these can in the smallest degree touch the rest which Jesus gives; but they may very seriously interfere with the rest which we are to find. They do not trouble the conscience, but they may greatly trouble the heart; they may make us very restless, very fretful, very impatient. For instance, I want to preach at Glasgow; I am announced to do so; but lo! I am shut up in a sickroom in London. This does not trouble my conscience, but it may greatly trouble my heart; I may be in a perfect fever of restlessness, ready to exclaim, "How tiresome; how terribly disappointing! Whatever am I to do? It is most untoward!"

And, how is this state of things to be met? How is the troubled heart and the restless mind to be calmed down? What do I want? I want to find rest. How am I to find it? By stooping down and taking Christ's precious yoke upon me - the very yoke which He Himself ever wore in the days of His flesh - the yoke of complete subjection to the will of God. I want to be able to say, without any reserve, to say from the very depths of my heart, Thy will, O Lord, be done. I want such a profound sense of His perfect love to me, and of His infinite wisdom in all His dealings with me, that I would not have it otherwise, if I could; yea, that I would not move a finger to alter my position or circumstances, feeling assured that it is very much better for me to be suffering on a sickbed in

London, than speaking on a platform in Glasgow.

Here lies the deep and precious secret of rest of heart, as opposed to restlessness. It is the simple ability to thank God for everything, be it ever so contrary to our own will, and utterly subversive of our own plans. It is not a mere assent to the truth that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." It is the positive sense, the actual realization of the divine fact that the thing which God appoints is the very best thing for us. It is perfect repose in the love, wisdom, power, and faithfulness of the One who has graciously undertaken for us in everything, and charged Himself with all that concerns us for time and eternity. We know that love will always do its very best for its object. What must it be to have God doing His very best for us? Where is the heart that would not be satisfied with God's best, if only it knows aught of Him?

But He must be known ere the heart can be satisfied with His will. Eve, in the garden of Eden, beguiled by the serpent, became dissatisfied with the will of God. She wished for something which He had forbidden, and this something the devil undertook to supply. She thought the devil could do better for her than God. She thought to better her circumstances by taking herself out of the hands of God and placing herself in the hands of Satan. Hence it is that no unrenewed heart can ever, by any possibility, rest in the will of God. If we search the human heart to the bottom, if we submit it to a faithful analysis, we shall not find so much as a single thought in unison with the will of God - no, not one. And even in the case of the true Christian, the child of God, it is only as he is enabled, by the grace of God, to mortify his own will, to reckon himself dead, and to walk in the Spirit, that he can delight in the will of God, and give thanks in everything. It is one of the very finest evidences of the new birth to be able, without a single shade of reserve, to say, in respect to every dealing of the hand of God, "Thy will be done." "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." When the heart is in this attitude, Satan can make nothing of it. It is a grand point to be able to tell the devil, and to tell the world- tell them not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth - not merely with the lips, but in the heart and the life - I am perfectly satisfied with the will of God.

This is the way to find rest. Let us see that we understand it. It is the divine remedy for that unrest, that spirit of discontent, that dissatisfaction with our appointed lot and sphere, so sadly prevalent on all hands. It is a perfect cure for that restless ambition so utterly opposed to the mind and Spirit of Christ, but so entirely characteristic of the men of this world.

May we, beloved reader, cultivate with holy diligence that meek and lowly spirit which is, in the sight of God, of great price, which bows to His blessed will in all things, and vindicates His dealings, come what may. Thus shall our peace flow as a river, and the name of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be magnified in our course, character, and conduct.

Ere turning from the deeply interesting and practical subject which has been engaging our attention, we would observe that there are three distinct attitudes in which the soul may be found in reference to the dealings of God; namely, subjection, acquiescence, and rejoicing. When the will is broken, there is subjection; when the understanding is enlightened as to the divine object, there is acquiescence; and when the affections are engaged with God Himself, there is positive rejoicing. Hence we read, in the 10th chapter of Luke, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in

Thy sight." That blessed One found His perfect delight in all the will of God. It was His meat and drink to carry out that will at all cost. In service or in suffering, in life or in death, He never had any motive but the Father's will. He could say, "I do always those things that please Him." Eternal and universal homage to His peerless name!

The Might of the Lord

Joshua 10

We now approach the great and decisive battle which brings in the succession of victories and the subjugation of the land, with the account of which the first part of the book of Joshua closes.

The combination of the kings and nations against Israel, with which the 9th chapter opens, was successful where wiles were adopted, but was utterly broken where open war was the means employed. Finding that Gibeon had made terms with Israel, Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem, summoned the king of Hebron and the adjoining kings to go up with him against that city, which at once called Joshua to its aid.

The king of Jerusalem, Adonizedek (the Lord of Righteousness), bore a similar title to his predecessor, Melchizedek (King of Righteousness), when Jerusalem (peaceful possession, or possession of peace) was called Salem (Peace). How the king of Righteousness and king of Peace (Heb. 7 and Gen. 14) waited on God's servant, Abraham, with the bread, and the wine, we know. In those days the living God was honored in Salem, and through all ages Melchizedek shines brightly as a type of Christ, the Priest and King. Hebron also, one of the earliest seats of civilization in Palestine, had its old associations in connection with the patriarchs. But now to Hebron comes the first call to fight against Israel. In the time, therefore, of the combination of the kings, the fear of the Most High had been shaken off by the nations of Canaan. The sun and the moon, Baal and Ashtaroath (Judg. 2:13), were worshiped, their iniquity was full, their harvest had passed, their summer ended, and the wrath of God was about to fall upon them.

No foes are so bitter in their hatred of God as those who once recognized His name. When Christianity was at first spread abroad, the Jews were its most determined opposers. The very truths they held, they turned as weapons against the gospel of the Son of God. They wrested the words of Moses and the prophets, and warred against God. The system of Rome's opposition to the truths of the Scripture is greater than was that of pagan Rome; and in the coming day modern infidelity, developed into apostate Christendom, will prove itself the fiercest foe the Word of God has ever had. In that approaching apostasy, lords of righteousness, bearing the good old titles and memories of faith in God long lost, ruling over their possessions of "peace," will be the moving powers of the opposition in Christendom to the Christ of God.

When the awful word of Jehovah demanding Israel to destroy the nations of Canaan is considered, the iniquity of the Amorites must ever be remembered. Their day had gone by; they were too wicked to be permitted to live.

Glancing through the Scriptures, and tracing God's ways in government with men, His judgments, long threatened, are seen coming at length upon the unrepentant. So it was with the men in Noah's days, after God had given them one hundred and twenty years in which to repent; their day had gone by; the flood came and swept them all away. So it was with the tribes of Israel, who were warned by the prophets continually; but, though often reprov'd, they hardened themselves

and were swept into captivity, no man knowing to this day whither they are scattered. After the wicked hands of Judah had taken Christ and crucified and slain Him, messages from Himself risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, were sent them, but they repented not. Hence the terrible word came at last to them, "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive" (Acts 28:26); and the Jews remain in their willful unbelief. Thus will it be in the coming day; the Gentiles, to whom now the word of God's salvation is sent, having become wise in their own conceits, and not continuing in His goodness, will be cut off (Rom. 11:17-25); and at last the wrath of God from heaven will be revealed against the men of apostate Christendom who obey not the gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-10)

The sudden and complete overthrow of the Amorites seemed to point to that day, and to the sudden destruction which shall come upon those who cry peace and safety, for "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2). The mighty intervention of Jehovah, in casting down great hailstones from heaven (v. 11), seems a kind of indication of the time "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God." Israel was but the sword of Jehovah; He Himself, in the great stones He cast down upon them, displayed His anger from heaven against the worshipers of demons and their pernicious ways.

Hence, in the day when Jehovah thus wrought in His majesty as "the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth" - even as His priest Melchizedek had declared Him (Gen. 14:19) - both sun and moon obeyed the bidding of His servant, until the sinners of Canaan were destroyed. We have but to read God's word in the book of Revelation to be aware that judgments more terrible and more wonderful are yet to fall upon this earth, and to learn that the Jews, who have turned their backs upon the Christ of God, and the professors in Christendom, who are already doing the same, shall, in the approaching day of the Lord, like these Amorites of old, be forced to drink Jehovah's cup of trembling. And, when the great day of His wrath is come, who shall be able to stand?

Up to the 15th verse of the chapter before us, there is a brief account given of that day of victory we have just considered; from the 16th verse to the end of the chapter, incidents in Israel's conquest are related. The quotation from the book of Jasher (the book of the upright) ends at the 15th verse, and records two great facts, both of which are again stated at the close of the chapter. The first great fact is this: "The LORD [Jehovah] fought for Israel," which explains the people's success. The second is this: "And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp of Gilgal," which gives the key to the subjective state of Israel, showing that Jehovah could be with them in His might.

We now briefly glance at some of the incidents in the conquest. The power of the five kings was suddenly and completely broken. "Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee," the Lord had said to Joshua who, therefore, came upon them suddenly. Strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, Israel attacked the enemy, "And the LORD discomfited them before Israel." Faith in God gives unquenchable energy to God's people, and faith's victories are the result of God's people carrying out His purposes.

The confederate kings saw only the sword of Israel, but the Israelites wielded that sword at the word of Jehovah. God has work to be done. He communicates His purpose to His people, and, if acting in faith, they simply obey His word. God leads on His servants in the path of obedience,

gives them encouraging promises, enables them to believe His faithful word in the face of every seeming impossibility, and then, in answer to their faith, crowns their obedience with complete success. Well may they say, "Thou... hast wrought all our works in us" (Isa. 26:12). When Joshua bade the sun stand still, he was carrying out the purpose of God, whose power is almighty, and at whose bidding both sun and moon obey. The idolaters might cry to the sun and the moon for help, to Baal and Ashtaroth; but Jehovah the Most High would show to His people that the powers of heaven are merely His servants.

The five kings fled and hid themselves in a cave, where Joshua kept them prisoners, while the judgment of Jehovah overtook their armies. The victory over the multitudes of Canaan was not to be used in a half-and-half kind of way. Success should be but the occasion of fresh effort. In their energy for the Lord, Israel pursued and slew until not a foe remained. Such is the spirit of true Christian warfare; the present vantage is made the base line for advance to further victory; every success, truly regarded, is but an incentive to further conquest.

After the people had returned, safe and sound, in peace, to Makkedah, their temporary camp, Joshua ordered the five kings to be brought out, and bidding the captains of the men of war, which went with him, to put their feet on the necks of these kings, he expressed in the most emphatic way the subjugation of the power of Canaan to the Lord's army. "These five kings," these chiefs, these rulers had to bow to Israel; and while Joshua fixed this fact upon Israel's mind, he reiterated the great exhortation which had been the moving spring of their energy: "Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight." A significant lesson to the Christian soldier lies here, who finds in his victories but the confirmation of the sure promises of his God, made at the commencement of the campaign, and also the anticipation of that final conquest of Satan which is near at hand, for "The God of peace shall bruise [tread] Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20).

The kings conquered and slain, city after city fell rapidly as "the LORD delivered" them into Israel's hands, and thus the whole of the south country, hills, v a l e s, a n d springs, became their possession. "All these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel." It was a very great conquest "at one time," and the consideration of it can but stir soldiers of Christ to faith and zeal, and to act in implicit obedience to the Lord.

An instructive lesson is to be gathered from the second victory at Hebron (Josh. 10:23 and 36). The king of Hebron was one of the five who had been slain at Makkedah, but a fresh king had been set up in the city. This center of government, with "all the cities thereof," and "all the souls... therein," was now overthrown. In their rapid conquest, Israel had not had time to search out all the hiding places of the fugitives, who therefore returned, and re-peopled and refortified old Hebron; hence it had to be re-conquered. And in Christian warfare, victory must be thorough. It is not enough to disperse and to scatter foes; the stronghold must be utterly destroyed. Spiritual foes, if baffled or even defeated, are not easily annihilated. Their lurking places must be sought out, else the enemy recovers his strength and returns to the war with revived activity. No sitting still or rest is lawful in this strife; spiritual energy and watchfulness need to be incessant, otherwise the wars will have to be fought over and over again.

The campaign over, Joshua and all Israel returned to the camp at Gilgal. And Gilgal must ever be our camp; there is none other. Thither we must return after our victories. Makkedah may avail to

witness the destruction of the power of the enemy, but Gilgal witnesses the judgment of self, the power of the cross of Christ on what we are.

The Most Sacred Inheritance

Josh. 13:14, 33

The countries which the children of Israel inherited in Canaan were settled by Jehovah by lot, and distributed by the high priest and the leader of Israel, the heads of the tribes conveying the Lord's directions to the people.

Levi's peculiar portion is first to be considered. "Unto the tribe of Levi He gave none inheritance; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as He said unto them." Chap. 13:14. "The LORD God of Israel was their inheritance" (chap. 13:33). Levi was "scattered" in Israel, according to the prophecy of Jacob; but Levi's portion was the most sacred and the most precious of all. Wherever the other tribes dwelt, there was Levi; wherever the devout spirits in Israel worshiped the Lord, there Levi had his inheritance. The Lord - not a position - was Levi's lot. "The LORD God of Israel was their inheritance." And so it is that the happiest and wealthiest Christians are they who find in the Lord Himself their portion. Whether dwelling among the two and a half tribes on the other side Jordan, or among the nine and a half in Canaan, not the special position of the land where their cities were, but Jehovah Himself, and the sacrifices made by fire to Him, were Levi's inheritance. "The breadth, and length, and depth, and height" (Eph. 3:18) are most truly comprehended by those Christians who have most of Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith; by those who, like Levi, have the Lord Himself and the sacrifices as their conscious portion. It is well to fight the giants and to overcome cities; but it is better to sacrifice burnt offerings and to partake of peace offerings, to worship God and to hold communion with Him concerning the Lord Jesus.

Levi's portion, in one sense, could never be assailed, either by the dweller in the land or by the foreign foe; for even in the darkest day of Israel's departure, when the people of God had betaken themselves to caves and holes in the earth for fear of the enemy, Levi could look up to the unclouded heavens and exclaim to Jehovah, Thou art my portion and the lot of my inheritance. Yet in another sense, Levi would be the first to suffer in the day of Israel's adversity, for the sacrifices of Israel were Levi's portion, and these would fail when the foe held Israel captive. And so it is, those nearest to Christ, while they rejoice in a portion that can never be removed, and which never can vary, are the first to feel, in all its acuteness, the spiritual poverty of saints or their affliction by the enemy.

Israel, responsible to maintain their possession in Canaan, might and did utterly fail; the heathen and the idols might and did obtain the mastery over them; but the unchangeable God was Levi's inheritance, and wherever the spirit of worship to Him arose in any of Israel, and sacrifices by fire were offered to Him, there Levi had his inheritance.

With the material blessings of Israel before our eye - their land flowing with milk and honey, and fed with depths springing out of valleys and hills - it is not difficult to discern the peculiar position occupied by Levi. And, spiritually understood, in the Levites' inheritance is seen the believer's

most perfect portion; for, while we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, while we have in Him pleasures bestowed upon us for evermore, we have, beyond all blessings which are conferred upon us through or in Christ, the Lord Himself. Indeed, believers are brought into the blessings of Christianity that they may delight in Christ. God has saved and brought His people to Himself, for no less an end than that of their being like the Lord and knowing Him as they are known (1 Cor. 13:12). God's grace toward us reaches beyond deliverance from wrath and entrance into life. Therefore, while we contemplate His mercy - the forgiveness of sins, redemption of Christ, death and resurrection with Christ - it is for us to reach forth, in order that we may realize and abide in our nearest and highest portion. "That I may know Him" (Phil. 3:10), is the high aim of the energy of the new life.

When the Lord is seen, by faith, in His excellence, the glory of His light dims everything else. Saul of Tarsus saw His face brighter than the noonday sun, and thenceforth Saul was for heaven. The Lord in the heavens instructed him not only concerning the glory, but opened to him the wonder of His own heart there.

It is well to consider our unchangeable God and our unvarying portion in Him before we dwell on the failure of God's people in general, either to lay firm hold of the conquered portions of the land, or to advance and conquer the portions still unpossessed. Let the Lord Himself fill the heart, and the possessions will be obtained; but where possessions are the object and not the Lord, the soul is dry and unprofitable, and the hard and unprofitable soul soon loses the conscious grip of its possessions.

Nevertheless: Marriage

The word which forms the heading of this paper occurs in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, and the last verse. It is a very important word, as indicating what we are all so prone to forget, that there are two sides to every question and, in particular, to the great question before the Apostle's mind in this passage. He is speaking of the subject of marriage, and of the relative duties of husband and wife; and he uses as an illustration the great mystery of Christ and the Church.

Now there are two sides to this subject. There is a heavenly side, and there is an earthly side. We need them both. We cannot dispense with either; and the Holy Ghost has, in His infinite wisdom, bound them indissolubly together by the little word "nevertheless"; and, may we not say, What God has joined together let not man put asunder? It is quite true-blessedly true-that the Church's relation to Christ is heavenly, that the Church is called to know, rejoice in, feed upon, walk with, follow, and be conformed to a heavenly Christ.

All this is what we may call vital and fundamental truth which cannot for a moment be given up or lost sight of without giving up, so far, the heavenly side of Christianity.

But are we not in danger of forgetting the practical application of all this to our present walk on the earth amid the stern realities of actual life day by day? Are not husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, earthly relationships? Unquestionably. True it is they are formed upon a heavenly model, and to be carried out after a heavenly pattern, as they also rest upon a heavenly base.

But still they are relationships in nature, formed on the earth, and to be carried out in daily life. There will be no such relationships in heaven. They do not belong to the resurrection state. They belong to nature, to earth, to our time-condition; and we are called to walk in them as Christian men, women, and children, and to glorify God by our spirit and temper and manner, our whole deportment therein, from hour to hour, and day to day.

Thus, for example, of what use is it for a man to traffic in lofty theories respecting the heavenly relationship of Christ and the Church, while he fails, every day of his life, in his earthly relationship as a husband? His wife is neglected, perhaps treated coldly or harshly; she is not nourished, cherished, sustained, and ministered to according to the heavenly model of Christ and His Church.

No doubt, the same pointed question may be asked in reference to the wife, and to all the other sacred relationships of our earthly and natural existence; for there are two sides to every question.

Hence the very great importance of the Apostle's "nevertheless." We may depend upon it, it has a wide application. It is most evident that the Holy Ghost anticipated the need of such a qualifying, modifying, regulating clause, when, having descanted upon the heavenly side of the subject of marriage, He adds, "Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife ever as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

Christian reader, let us remember the two sides. Let us deeply ponder the inspired "nevertheless." We may rest assured there is a need of it. There is the most urgent need of the practical application of divine and heavenly truth to our natural relationships and earthly ways. We have to remember that God recognizes nature, else why have we marriage? Flesh is not recognized, but nature is, and even admitted as a teacher (see 1 Cor. 11:14). We are not yet actually in heaven. We are there, thank God, as to our standing, there in principle, there in spirit, there by faith. Our life, our portion, our hope, our home, are there because Christ is there.

But we are here on the earth, called to represent Christ in this world, as He represents us in heaven. God views us as men, women, and children, called to tread the sand of the desert, and to meet the positive realities of daily life. Life is a reality- an actual, bona fide practical reality - and our God has provided for us, in view of this fact, by the priestly ministry of Christ on high, and by the ministry of the Holy Ghost and the teachings of Holy Scripture here below. We must have what is real to meet what is real. We are not called, thank God, to be occupied with visionary notions, with empty theories, with a powerless sentimentality, nor even with one-sided truth. No; we are called to be real, genuine, sound, practical Christian men, women, and children. We are called to display in our daily history here on this earth the practical results of that which we know and enjoy by faith in heaven. In one word, we must never forget that when the very highest truths are being unfolded before us, there is a healthful and holy application of these truths indicated by the inspired "nevertheless."

A Noble Example of the True Inheritor

Josh. 14:5-15

It is not without purpose that the divinely inspired historian places on record the bright and brave spirit of the true possessor before detailing the extent and the boundaries of the inheritance of the nine and a half tribes in the land of Canaan. The soul requires fire within, strength and courage in God; and with these, we shall make our own what God has given us.

From the 14th to the end of the 19th chapter of Joshua, we read of the apportioning of Canaan to the nine and a half tribes. The incident of the noble purpose of Caleb to possess Hebron introduces this important history.

These nine and a half tribes had to make their own foothold in their inheritance, though the situation of their possessions was determined by Jehovah Himself. "By lot was their inheritance," but upon themselves, as upon the Christian in spiritual things, depended their foothold of the possession. Israel had reached that stage in their history in Canaan when they stood where the two ways of slothfulness and of earnestness met. At this stage, how many would be Calebs? How many would be true possessors who would arise and pursue the path of earnestness to victory?

"As the LORD commanded... the children of Israel did,... they divided the land" (v. 5); and then it was to Joshua, at the camp of Gilgal - Gilgal with its grand associations of Jehovah-given freedom - that the men of Judah came. Caleb stood up before the leader and all Israel, and, in the burning spirit of the true possessor, put in his claim to the mountains of Hebron, and the great and fenced cities thereof.

Caleb's words must have stirred every faithful soul as, addressing Joshua, he said, "Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea." The Lord was the same unchangeable Lord to Caleb, though forty-five years had gone by, and a new dispensation had arisen for Israel; and Caleb's old associates were dead and gone-buried, because of their unbelief, in the wilderness, for he alone believed in the faithful promise of the Lord. Forty-five years previously, in the dark hour of Israel's rebellion against Jehovah, Caleb had stood firm for his God. When the fainthearted spies urged the people to unbelief, brave Caleb stayed himself upon God, and, regardless of the favor of his old associates, he answered their mean and unbelieving words by "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Numb. 13:30), while, to the wails and despondency of Israel, his firm heart answered, "If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey." Numb. 14:8.

The Lord had said of him in that day, "But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land where into he went; and his seed shall possess it." v. 24. Caleb's faith lifted him out of the murmurs of Israel, their cowardice, and their reproaches of the Lord. He trusted in God, held on to Him and left in His hands difficulties and

giants; one thing only he sought - the Lord's delight in him.

And Moses swore on that day, and promised Caleb the land whereon his feet had trodden. God grant His people the courage to put down their feet upon His promises, for every one shall be made good.

From that day in Kadeshbarnea, Caleb occupied a peculiar position in Israel. In the darkest hours of the wilderness, in the dreariest nights of Israel's wanderings, amid pestilence and divine displeasure, Caleb was sustained by the promise of his God. He had to suffer with the unbelieving host, to be afflicted with them (which principles are as true today as then, for all suffer together, and the unbelief and rebellion of one affects others); but while Israel's warriors might perish, Caleb knew that his feet should stand upon the mountains of Hebron; and while thousands might die at his right hand, Caleb knew that his family should possess the great and fenced cities of the children of Anak, for the Lord had said it.

Caleb is an example to us in our day of weakness and murmuring. In him we behold a sample of the finest qualities of Christian soldier ship; wholeheartedness for God, unabated strength through God, and continual dependence on God. Forty-five years of habitual reliance on God had not elated his soul in his old age to self-reliance, nor had forty-five years of God's continued favor in any wise diminished in Caleb the sense that in God alone is our strength, as his words declare. "If so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said." How this noble possessor shames the feeble, nerveless soul! To have lived for thirty-eight years in a very chorus of murmurings and yet still to sing, "The LORD is my strength and song," is a miracle indeed; and a miracle it was, as Caleb owned, "The LORD hath kept me alive, as He said." "As He said"; for Caleb had not dropped down like other men of war and died.

All his wilderness way, and all his soldier life, the Lord's delight in His people was Caleb's source of courage - courage which, when he was eighty-five years of age, impelled him to battle with the families of the giants of Canaan with ardor equal to that which had enabled him, when he was forty years old, to withstand greater giants than they, even the murmuring and unbelief of Israel. "Now therefore," said he, "give me this mountain," for "I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." Few soldiers of Christ can so speak. Too many an aged Christian soldier seems to regard his long term of service as a plea for immunity from that hourly dependence on God, which at the first won him his victories; and "if the Lord... be with me" becomes exchanged for the vainglorious and the degenerate, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself" (Judg. 16:20).

Joshua blessed Caleb as he spoke; and a special blessing from Christ, our Leader, rests upon every Caleb-like Christian. The Lord honored Caleb's dependence on Himself; He drove thence the three sons of Anak and smote Kirjath-arba, and restored to the city its old name of Hebron, which associated the locality with the father of the faithful, and not with the great man among the giants.

Caleb is a name of rude signification, for it means a whelp. Some regard this as an index to his faithfulness, for as the dog follows his master, so did Caleb follow the Lord with true purpose; some regard the name as indicating the special glory of Judah, for "Judah is a lion's whelp" (Gen.

49:9). Be the true significance of his name what it may, Caleb, the faithful man, had his portion in the great inheritance of Judah - "Praise." And thus it is to this day in things spiritual among God's soldiers; faithful men dwell in praise; yes, and "They will be still praising Thee" (Psalm 84:4). His brave spirit arose to its greatness among the murmurs of Israel, and he inherited in the noblest portion of the promised land; God, as it were, granting to the man who spoke well of His name in the place of murmurings, a home in the land of "Praise."

On Service

To a really obedient heart the question is not at all, What am I doing? or, Where am I going? It is simply, Am I doing the will of my Lord?

We have ever to be on our guard against a spirit of self-will and self-pleasing, which is never so dangerous as when it clothes itself in the garb of religious service, and work so-called.

We as Christians are very apt to jostle one another; indeed, we are sure to do so if we do not each one pursue his own divinely appointed line of work.

If the Lord has made one man an evangelist, another a teacher, another a pastor, and another an exhorter, how is the work to go on? Surely it is not by the evangelist trying to teach, and the teacher to exhort, or one who is not fitted for either, trying to do both.

It is not a question of taking upon us much or little, but of doing our appointed work, and filling our appointed places. It is by the effectual working of all the members, according to the measure of every part, that the edification of the whole body is promoted.

Nothing can be more worthless than seeking a place for oneself. It is sure to end in disappointment and confusion.

One who comes forward much in public will need that chastened spirit, that matured judgment, that subdued and mortified mind, that broken will, that mellow tone, which are the sure and beautiful result of God's secret discipline; and it will generally be found that those who take a prominent place without more or less of the above moral qualifications, will, sooner or later, break down.

The Lord Jesus never once stopped to inquire how any act or circumstance would affect Himself.

It is impossible that a man full of himself can be a vessel of the Holy Ghost. Such a one must first be emptied of himself, and then the Spirit can use him.

If only we are self-emptied, our every act may emit a sweet odor to God. The smallest as well as the greatest services may, by the power of the Holy Ghost, present the fragrance of Christ. The paying of a visit, the writing of a letter, the public ministry of the Word, giving a cup of cold water to a disciple, giving a penny to a pauper, yes, the commonplace acts of eating and drinking - all may emit the sweet perfume of the name and grace of Jesus.

God has had all His servants very much alone with Himself, both before and after their entrance upon their public work; nor will anyone ever get on without this. The absence of secret training and discipline will, necessarily, leave us barren, superficial, and theoretic. A man who ventures forth upon a public career ere he has duly weighed himself in the balances of the sanctuary, or measured himself in the presence of God, is like a ship putting out to sea without the proper ballast; he will doubtless upset with the first stiff breeze. A man who is always doing, will be apt to do too much.

If I allow my work to get between my heart and the Master, it will be little worth. We can only effectually serve Christ as we are enjoying Him; nor is there anyone who can minister Christ with unction, freshness, and power to others, if he be not feeding upon Christ in the secret of his own soul.

The man who will present Christ to others must be occupied with Christ for himself.

God takes up the weakest instruments to accomplish His mightiest ends.

The man who is merely feeding on the fruits of his ministry, who delights in the gratification which it affords, or the attention and interest which it commands, is like a mere pipe conveying waters to others, and retaining only rust itself.

In order to act for God outside, I should be with Him inside.

Be it remembered that the man who will speak on God's behalf of death and judgment, life and salvation, must, ere he does so, enter into the practical power of these things in his own soul.

It frequently happens that the very person whose presence we deem essential to our progress and success, afterward proves a source of deepest sorrow to our hearts.

The messenger of God should ever remember whose message he bears.

One Thing: Three "One Thing"

"One thing thou lackest" (Mark 10:21). "One thing is needful" (Luke 10:42). "One thing I do" (Phil. 3:13).

The scriptures in which these three statements occur bring before us very different characters. In the first passage we learn that "one thing" was lacking in the rich young ruler. In the second, we learn in the story of Martha and Mary that the "one thing" lacking is the "one thing" needful. In the third scripture we find that the "one thing" needful is the "one thing" that marked the Apostle Paul.

Seeing that our Lord lays such stress upon this "one thing," it surely behooves us to search our hearts, in the light of these scriptures, with the earnest desire to be marked by this "one thing."

1. "One thing thou lackest" (Mark 10:17-22). In the story of the rich young ruler, two truths come prominently before us. First we learn that in many ways our lives may be excellent, and yet lack "one thing." Second we discover that this "one thing" is single-hearted devotedness to Christ.

Of all the different characters that came in contact with our Lord in His earthly course, none, perhaps, presents a more sorrowful end than that of this rich young ruler. There is so much at the commencement of his story that gave promise to a bright future as a disciple of Christ; yet, in the end, we read, he "went away grieved." As far as we have any record in Scripture, he is never again found in the company of Christ and His own. Therefore, even if at heart a believer, he missed the blessing of the company of Christ in the midst of His people, and failed as a witness for Christ in the world.

This young man was marked by many creature excellencies and much moral beauty. He was an earnest young man, for we read, he came "running" to the Lord. He was reverential, for he "kneeled" in His presence. He has a desire after spiritual blessings, such as eternal life. His outward life was blameless, for he had observed the outward law from his youth. All these qualities in their place are beautiful and attractive, and the Lord was not unmindful of these creature excellencies; for we read, "Jesus beholding him loved him." Yet, with all these excellencies, the Lord discerns there was "one thing" lacking.

To make manifest the one thing lacking in his life, the Lord applies three tests. As with the young man, so with ourselves; we may be living outwardly decent and blameless lives, and yet our witness for Christ be marred by the lack of "one thing." It will be well, therefore, to prove ourselves by the three tests that the Lord sets before the ruler.

He was tested by his earthly possessions.

He was tested by the cross.

3) He was tested by a Person-the rejected Christ. There was something he was asked to give up, something to take up, and Someone to follow.

The first test is earthly possessions. Taking them in the widest sense as all those things which would be an advantage to us as living in the world, we may ask, Have we weighed up all these things in the light of Christ, and counted them but loss for Christ? Have we reckoned up the advantages that birth may confer; the ease and worldly pleasures that riches can secure; the position, the honor, and dignities that intellect, or genius, or accomplishments, may command? Then, without minimizing these things, have we looked full in the face of Jesus-the One that is altogether lovely-and, seeing that He is incomparably greater than all these things, have we, in the power of affection for Christ, deliberately made the choice that Christ shall be our great Object, and not these things?

The second test is the cross. The Lord says to the young man, "Take up the cross." Are we prepared to accept the place in relation to the world in which the cross has set us before God? The Apostle could say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Gal. 6:14. The cross stands between us and our sins, the old man, and judgment; but have we also seen that it stands between us and the world? If we take up the cross, not only is the world condemned for us, but we shall be utterly refused by the world.

The third test is a rejected Christ; for the Lord says to the young man, "Follow Me." Are we prepared to identify ourselves with One who is hated and rejected by the world- One who was born in a stable, and cradled in a manger- who, in His passage through this world, had not where to lay His head-who died an ignominious death upon a cross of shame, and was buried in a borrowed grave-One who in resurrection was still found in company with a few poor fisher folk-One who was, and still is, in the outside place of reproach? Are we prepared to go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach?

Thus, the tests in that day, as well as this, are, Can we give up earthly advantages, take a place outside the world, and follow Christ, the One who is in reproach? These tests come to us as they came to the young man, and the question for each one is, What answer shall we give?

We can answer these tests in one of two ways. First, like the young man of whom we read, he "went away grieved," we may turn back to the things of earth. He did not turn away in anger or hatred of Christ. He had no fault to find with Christ, but the world was too strong for him. Like Demas, of a later day, he loved this present world. Second, we may give an answer like Peter and the disciples, of whom we learn, they left all and followed Christ (v. 28).

The one thing the young man lacked was single-hearted devotedness to Christ. So he "went away." The disciples, with all their ignorance, their weakness, and their many failures, were drawn to Christ in affection and so left all to follow Him.

How often since that day has the history of this young man been repeated. Is there anything sadder than to look back and remember how many young men made a good start and seemed to promise well, but where are they today? In spite of excellencies such as earnestness, sincerity, and zeal, they turned back, if not to the gross world, to the corrupt religious world; and the reason is plain; they lacked the "one thing"-single-hearted devotedness to Christ, that sets Christ before the soul as the first and supreme Object of the life. It may be they put themselves before Christ, or the need of souls before Christ, or the good of saints before Christ, or service before Christ, with

the result that, in the end, they turned back to the things of earth. There is not sufficient power in the love of souls, the love of saints, or the desire to serve, to keep our feet in the narrow path. Only Christ Himself can hold us in the outside place of reproach, following hard after Him.

2. "One thing is needful" (Luke 10:38-42). Passing to the touching scene at Bethany, we find two devoted women, of whom one lacked the "one thing" needful, while the other chose "that good part."

Martha, like the rich young man of Mark 10, was characterized by much that was excellent. The house at Bethany, apparently, belonged to her; and she willingly opened her home to receive the Lord of glory. Then, not only was she hospitable, but she was a busy servant in the service of the Lord. There are "many things" to be done for the Lord in this world, and Martha was occupied with these "many things." Nevertheless, with all these excellencies she had overlooked "one thing"; and she was to learn that the "one thing" she had overlooked, is the "one thing needful." In result, she was cumbered with service, irritated with her sister, and complaining before the Lord. How truly Martha represents that large class of Christians who, unconsciously to themselves, make their particular service their great object, rather than the Lord Himself. Such would engage all others as helpers in their special service, and are irritated if left "to serve alone." Lacking the "one thing," they are careful and troubled about "many things."

How right and happy to put our homes and means at the disposal of the Lord, and to be occupied in His blessed service; and yet this scene warns us that it is possible for these activities to be first in our thoughts and affections, rather than the Lord Himself. If this is so, we lack the "one thing" needful-the single-hearted devotedness that puts Christ before all service.

Of Mary we read, she chose the "good part," and that "good part" was part with Christ. For her, Christ was the supreme Object before all else, whether possessions, or service, or her sister. Having Christ as her one Object, she escaped the restlessness, the care, and trouble that marked her zealous sister. While Martha was "cumbered about much serving," Mary was calmly sitting at the feet of Jesus. When Martha came to the Lord with her complaining word, Mary "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word."

We are not left to form our spiritual judgment as to the differences between these two sisters, for we are plainly told that the Lord reproved Martha and commended Mary.

In making the Lord her Object, Mary had chosen the "good part" which was not to be taken from her. Very soon we shall leave all earthly possessions; in yet a little, service and toil will be past, but forever and ever Christ will be the portion and Object of our souls. Mary chose the eternal portion in time; she made Him her one great Object, and chose above all else to sit in His company. Other things may be taken away, but this will not be taken away. For as she chose to be with Him in time, so will she be with Him for all eternity.

Does then, this better choice-this "one thing needful"- mean that Mary neglected service for the Lord? Scripture not only rebukes such a thought, but clearly shows that she not only served the Lord, but her service was stamped with the Lord's approval in a way that is unique above all other service before or since. Here the Lord says, "Mary hath chosen that good part." In the fine scene of Matthew 26, the Lord says, "She hath wrought a good work upon Me." The one who chose the "good part," in due season does the "good work."

So high is the Lord's approval of this good work, that He says, "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." (Matt. 26:10-13.)

Let us remember that the "good part" must precede the "good work." Only as Christ is our one Object will service and all else fall into its rightful place.

3. "One thing I do" (Phil. 3:13). Turning now to the third chapter of the epistle to the Philippians, we find in the Apostle one who, above all others, answered to the three tests that the Lord set before the rich young ruler. He gave up earthly possessions, he took up the cross, and he followed Christ.

First, what were the possessions that he gave up? Like the young ruler, Paul was marked by creature excellencies and worldly advantages in no small degree. He was wellborn, he was freeman of no mean city, he was highly educated, he was intensely zealous in his religion, and as touching the law he was blameless.

All these circumstances and qualities combined to give him a great place in this world. But there came a day when, like the rich young man, he came in touch with Christ. Then came the test. Could he give up all that was an advantage to him as a man in this world—all those things which made something of Paul—in order that he might make everything of Christ? Let us remember that neither the rich young ruler, nor the "young man... whose name was Saul," was asked to give up the things of shame. All realize that we cannot follow Christ and go on with the hidden things of shame. Such things we are glad enough to leave behind. The test was, and is, Can worldly advantages, human zeal, and blameless character, natural birth, religious reputation, be left behind as an object so that henceforth, instead of self, Christ may become the one Object of the life?

Instead of turning away grieved from Christ, and going back to his great possessions, like the rich young ruler, Paul forgot "those things which are behind" and reached forth unto Christ. He saw the glory of Christ, and he saw Christ in the glory. The rich ruler came in contact with Christ, but, apparently, in spite of all His wonderful miracles, he only saw in Christ a good Man; he did not see the glory of Christ. This made the great difference between these two young men. Paul saw the glory of Christ, with the immediate result that all the glory of this world—all those things which were gain to him as a man in the flesh—were counted loss for Christ. He did not belittle these natural advantages; on the contrary, he reckoned them up, and having done so, he counted them loss when compared with the glory of Christ. His natural excellencies were eclipsed by the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" his Lord.

Second, there was not only what he gave up, but what he took up. In all truth he took up the cross. His one desire, as he passed through this world, was to be "made conformable unto His death"—the death of Christ. If Christ had died to the world, then Paul would have done with the world. For Paul, the cross not only ended himself as a man in the flesh, but it forever closed to him this present evil world.

Third, having given up all his natural advantages as the object of his life, having taken up the cross which closed the world, he followed Christ as the one Object of his life. He turned his back on all earthly religion; he went outside the camp unto Christ, bearing His reproach. Henceforth Christ was his one Object, for he can say:

"For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21);

"That I may win Christ" (chap. 3:8);

"Be found in Him" (chap. 3:9);

"That I may know Him" (chap. 3:10).

Here then was a man who could say in all truth, the one thing that ruler lacked, the "one thing" that Martha had to learn is needful, is the "ONE THING I DO." Henceforth his life was a life of single-hearted devotedness to. Christ. For him, Christ was the one supreme Object-not sinners, not saints, not service-but Christ. No one was ever more zealous in preaching the gospel of the grace of God to sinners, no one ever cared for all the churches like the Apostle, no one was more untiring in service; but above all and before all, Christ was his one Object. He did not lack the "one thing" like the ruler; he was not distracted by "many things" like Martha. He had before him one thing- to follow Christ. Thus it was he forgot "those things which are behind" and reached forth unto "those things which are before."

Moreover, he lets us know what these things are. He shows us very clearly that they all center in Christ.

Christ in the glory (chap. 2:9, 10).

The calling on high of God in Christ Jesus (chap. 3:14).

The coming of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (chap. 3:20).

Being "fashioned like unto His glorious body" (chap. 3:21).

How good then to make Christ our one Object. If we make service our object, we shall end in seeking to exalt ourselves. If we make sinners our object, we shall in all probability be drawn back into the world. If we make saints our object, they will break our hearts. But if Christ is our first and supreme Object, we shall, like the Apostle, fight a good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith; for Christ alone can hold our feet in the narrow path, guide us through every difficulty, and sustain us in the presence of every opposition. May we then in our little measure be able to say with the Apostle, "One thing I do... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Chap. 3:13, 14.

The Order of the Epistles

As the "certain Samaritan" journeyed he found the poor man who had been going down from Jerusalem to Jericho in a pitiable plight beside the road. Without the action of the Samaritan the man would have died, but this stranger - picture of the Lord from heaven-came right where he was and mercifully met him in his dire need.

The epistle to the Romans describes the condition to which sin had reduced man, and also shows that only mercy would meet his case. This mercy on a righteous basis is beautifully unfolded in this epistle.

But the Samaritan did not leave the rescued man to shift for himself; that would never do. He put him on his own beast and took him to the inn where he could be taken care of. And, before leaving him there, he made every provision at the inn for his keep until the day he would return.

The next epistle-the First Epistle to the Corinthians- brings us to the inn, the Church of God. There we find that every provision has been made for our sustenance while down here awaiting the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the "inn" is the Spirit of God, and every member is to function in his own place. The assembly on earth is the place for the care of the saints - rescued sinners. This epistle also gives full directions for the right ordering of the "inn."

Then all of the other epistles come in their places as the proper food and instructions for those at the "inn." No need can arise for which provision has not been made. All of the troubles and abuses that would come into the Church were anticipated and full directions written out.

May we appreciate the grace that met us in our need. May we value the "inn." May we be found gathered together in the assembly to receive the food prepared for us by the One who has gone away and is coming back.

Our Great Physician

Our Father never causes us a tear-not one-needlessly. He afflicts, not for His pleasure, but for our profit, and to make us partakers of His holiness. This I believe cannot be done apart from much trial. Some medicines sicken us; but often the disease cannot be healed without it, and our great Physician is well content to have us sick for a day, that we might have the blessing forever.

Oh! blessed be the discipline of love, which wisely seeks our cure, and grudges neither care on His side, nor suffering on ours.

Our Trials Appointed by God

Whatever be the nature of the sufferings of the present time, and however lasting they may be, if we compare them with the eternal weight of glory which awaits us, we shall say with the Apostle Paul, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4:17.

It is God who comforts us under trials, turning for us our bitter waters into sweet, if indeed in these things we hearken to the voice of His Word. Our God and Father has the disposing of all events. Nothing can happen without God. He suits our trials and our comforts to the necessities of our souls. It is for us to trust in Him as the all-wise and all-faithful God. By the cross of Christ we are entitled to dwell under the shadow of the Almighty. He is our refuge from the storm of circumstances, and our fortress against the power of the enemy.

The Patience of Hope

There is nothing we less expect a recompense for than the "patience of hope"; but nothing is more precious to God, and nothing more marks a believer's life in the light. If I have got Christ as the spring of my heart, I must expect nothing but conflict down here; but what is there for me up there? "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them." He says, I make over to you the glory which My Father has given Me; I share it with you; I keep back nothing from you. Have I got it yet? No; I have to wait for it.

There was to be a space between His going up there, and our getting up there. We have got His heart all the way, but the interim is to be a time of suffering, a time of patience. Are you girded up for it? You know you are in the Father; has He not shown a Father's bosom, and love flowing out of it to you? Not saved only, but the greatness of the Father's love bringing me into fellowship with Himself, so that I can say, "I mind heavenly things; my fellowship is with the Father and the Son in heaven."

Everything comes by permission to search the believer; but if God says, I have shed My love abroad in your hearts, can Satan take out of a man's heart that love? The character of love is abiding. Some, alas, do turn aside; but what single thing down here can you covet, if looking up in the patience of hope, waiting for Christ's coming?

Peace and Worship

"And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there: and the land was subdued before them." Josh. 18:1.

This verse introduces a new era in Israel's history. Instead of the camp at Gilgal, Shiloh, the place of worship, becomes the center for the people. It is now no longer the place of God-made liberty, where the reproach of Egypt is rolled off, but the place chosen of God for the tabernacle of the congregation to stand. The camp, with its self-denial and its hardship, is exchanged for peace and worship.

Standing in God-made liberty, and not being slack in self-denial, we go forth to spiritual warfare, and so become possessors practically of our God-bestowed portion in Christ; and this spirit leads to the further step of worship. Shiloh signifies "peace" or "rest"; and Israel, having conquered a large amount of their inheritance, and being at rest (for "the land was subdued before them"), set up the tabernacle of the congregation in that place which the Lord had chosen to put His name there (Deut. 12:11).

At Gilgal the Lord rolled off the reproach from Israel, and made His people His freed men; at Ebal He established His word in the promised land, and laid Israel under obedience to His laws; at Shiloh He established His name in their midst, and dwelt among them. God makes the peace; and, blessed in the peace He has made, His saints worship Him. His hand produces the rest in which alone His people can dwell with Him, and He among them.

Shiloh was situated nearly in the center of Israel's inheritance; and, if we regard Shiloh (peace) as a figure to us of Christ who is our peace, remembering that one of His names is Shiloh (Gen. 49:10), we find at once the true Center of all the vast circle of God's saints, in the fullness of their spiritual possessions.

At Shiloh were the one altar and the one tabernacle, Israel's center; around this divinely appointed center the circle of the twelve tribes was drawn. The extent of the circle would be according to the multitude of the children of Israel; the center itself could never vary. Thither would each faithful heart of the vast congregation turn, as surely as every compass points to the pole. Christ is the Center for His people, and around Him is the circle of all His redeemed - "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10). Christ alone is the Object of each heart's adoration. God has given no other attraction for His saints. Christ will be the Center in the glory; and even now upon the earth, despite all the divisions of language and of race, yes, and of creeds and isms, Jesus only is the Center for His people.

Israel's tabernacle was the common inheritance of the nation; the chief of the fathers and the humblest of the Israelites alike worshiped there, for Jehovah's one people they were, and He dwelt among them.

There could be no divinely owned association of the tribes, save where the glory of God was - at Shiloh. Every true association of the saints of God has His presence, and fellowship of heart and purpose in His presence; "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:7). Christ is the only Center of true fellowship among those who are united to Him and to each other; and true fellowship among Christians only exists so far as this is practically recognized. Christians are now God's circle upon the earth, of which Christ is the Center. God has made them, though many, one body by His Spirit who dwells in them; and so long as Christ is really and truly the practical Center of God's saints, unity among themselves, holiness, peace, and the joy of worshiping the Father result.

Let Christ be lost sight of as the Center, and, lo! Shiloh becomes but a name, a memory of bygone days. Shiloh now is strewn with stones, one of the waste places on the earth, a solemn remembrance of glory, worship, and peace of departed years.

The tabernacle was Jehovah's tent, or dwelling place; and since Israel was His chosen nation, it was "the tabernacle of the congregation" - the tent of the meeting of the people and God. They were not only established in the place of God's appointment, surrounding Him according to the principles of His Word, but they were associated with God and He with them. His name demanded holiness in them, obedience from them, practical godliness and a national life, such as He could smile upon. Alas, how Israel's history comments upon Israel's disobedience! Jehovah's changeless holiness is written upon the ruins of Shiloh. Its desolation is an eloquent testimony to the divine displeasure against departure from Himself. "Go ye now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel." Jer. 7:12. Yet each of the three hundred and fifty years and more that the ark remained there declares the Lord's great patience with His rebellious people! God will ever keep His truth, but He has made His saints the caretakers thereof; if then His people dishonor Him, He will scatter them, and they will lose their place of trust. As we ponder over the suggestive history of Shiloh, let us take heed to the word of our God, "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.... Is this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD." Jer. 7:4, 11.

But Shiloh foretells a brighter day to come. It speaks of the gathering together of the scattered tribes of Israel to the Christ they now reject. It has also its encouragement for the Christian believer. We find, declared in the 17th of John's Gospel, the union of the family of God's children. First, the apostolic unity,

which nothing did sever; second, the general unity of grace; third, the unity of glory. Practical union, displayed upon the earth, is a testimony to the world; and to this, responsibility attaches itself; but there shall be union displayed in the glory when this day of divisions is no more. In the coming day of peace and rest, the one undivided company of the family of God shall behold the glory of the Lord Jesus, which the Father has given Him. Then all hearts shall be united eternally; then all desires shall be fixed undistractedly upon Christ; then the saints shall all see eye to eye. Then the whole of God's rich blessings shall be the portion of the whole of God's people. Then rest from war shall be the portion of all; and, in the sunshine of cloudless peace, in the glory of God, shall our Shiloh be. The tabernacle of God shall be with men! (See Rev. 21.)

The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures

Now, in pondering the path of our Lord, in considering His marvelous life, there is one point which demands our profound and reverent attention, and that is the way in which He ever used the Word of God-the place which He ever gave to the Holy Scriptures. This we consider to be a subject of great importance at the present moment. The Word of God gets its own paramount place as the only rule, the only standard, the only authority for man. It meets him in every position, in every relationship, in every sphere of action, and in every stage of his moral and spiritual history. It tells him what he ought to do, and what he ought not. It furnishes him with ample guidance in every difficulty. It descends, as we shall see, to the most minute details-such details, indeed, as fill us with amazement to think that the high and mighty One that inhabits eternity could occupy Himself with them- to think that the omnipotent Creator and Sustainer of the vast universe could stoop to legislate about a bird's nest (Deut. 22:6).

Such is the Word, of God, that peerless revelation, that perfect and inimitable volume which stands alone in the history of literature. And we may say that one special charm of the book of Deuteronomy, one peculiar feature of interest, is the way in which it exalts the Word of God, and enforces upon us the holy and happy duty of unqualified and unhesitating obedience.

Yes; we repeat, and would fervently emphasize the words -unqualified and unhesitating obedience. We would have these wholesome words sounded in the ears of Christian professors throughout the length and breadth of the earth. We live in a day specially marked by the setting up of man's reason, man's judgment, man's will. In short, we live in what the inspired Apostle calls "man's day." On all hands we are encountered by lofty and boastful words about human reason, and the right of every man to judge and reason and think for himself. The thought of being absolutely and completely governed by the authority of Holy Scripture is treated with sovereign contempt by thousands of men who are the religious guides and teachers of the professing church. For any one to assert his reverent belief in the plenary inspiration, the all-sufficiency and the absolute authority of Scripture, is quite sufficient to stamp him as an ignorant, narrow-minded man, if not a semi-lunatic, in the judgment of some who occupy the very highest position in the professing church. In our universities, our colleges, and our schools, the moral glory of the divine volume is fast fading away; and instead thereof our young people are led and taught to walk in the light of science, the light of human reason. The Word of God itself is impiously placed at the bar of man's judgment, and reduced to the level of the human understanding. Everything is rejected which soars beyond man's feeble vision.

Thus the Word of God is virtually set aside. For, clearly if Scripture is to be submitted to human judgment, it ceases to be the Word of God. It is the very height of folly to think of submitting a divine and therefore perfect revelation to any tribunal whatsoever. Either God has given us a revelation, or He has not. If He has, that revelation must be paramount, supreme, above and beyond all question, absolutely unquestionable, unerring, divine. To its authority all must bow down without a single question. To suppose for a moment that man is competent to judge the

Word of God, able to pronounce upon what is or what is not worthy of God to say or to write, is simply to put man in God's place. And this is precisely what the devil is aiming at, although many of his instruments are not aware that they are helping on his designs.

But the question is continually cropping up before us, How can we be sure that we have, in our English Bible, the bona fide revelation of God? We reply, God can make us sure of it. If He does not, no one can. If He does, no one need. This is our ground, and we deem it unassailable. We should like to ask all those who start this infidel question-for such we must honestly call it-Supposing that God cannot give us the absolute certainty that, in our common English Bible, we do actually possess His own most precious, priceless revelation, then whither are we to turn? Of course, in such a weighty matter on which momentous and eternal consequences hang, a single doubt is torture and misery. If I am not sure of possessing a revelation from God, I am left without a single ray of light for my path. I am plunged in darkness, gloom, and mental misery. What am I to do? Can man help me by his learning, his wisdom, or his reason? Can he solve my difficulty, answer my question, remove my doubt, dissipate my fear? Is man better able than God to give me the assurance that God has spoken?

The idea is absolutely monstrous-monstrous in the very highest degree. The plain fact is this, reader; if God cannot give us the certainty that He has spoken, we are left without His Word altogether. If we must turn to human authority, call it what you please, in order to guarantee the Word of God to our souls, then that authority is higher and greater, safer and more trustworthy, than the Word which it guarantees. Blessed be God, it is not so. He has spoken to our hearts. He has given us His Word, and that Word carries its own credentials with it. It stands in no need of letters of commendation from a human hand. What! Turn to man to accredit the Word of the living God? Apply to a worm to give us the assurance that our God has spoken to us in His Word? Away forever with the blasphemous notion, and let our whole moral being-all our ransomed powers-adore the matchless grace, the sovereign mercy, that has not left us to grope in the darkness of our own minds, or to be bewildered by the conflicting opinions of men, but has given us His own perfect and most precious revelation, the divine light of His Word to guide our feet into the path of certainty and peace; to enlighten our understandings and comfort our hearts; to preserve us from every form of doctrinal error and moral depravity; and, finally, to conduct us into the rest, blessedness, and glory of His own heavenly kingdom. All praise to His name, throughout the everlasting ages!

But we must bear in mind that the marvelous privilege of which we have spoken-and truly it is most marvelous-is the basis of a most solemn responsibility. If it be true that God has in His infinite goodness given us a perfect revelation of His mind, then what should be our attitude in reference to it? Are we to sit in judgment upon it? Are we to discuss, argue, or reason? Alas! for all who do so. They will find themselves on terribly dangerous ground. The only true, the only proper, the only safe attitude for man in the presence of God's revelation, is obedience-simple, unqualified, hearty obedience. This is the only right thing for us, and this is the thing which is pleasing to God. The path of obedience is the path of sweetest privilege, rest, and blessing. This path can be trodden by the merest babe in Christ, as well as by the "young men" and the "fathers." There is the one straight and blessed path for all. Narrow it is, no doubt; but oh! it is safe, bright, and elevated. The light of our Father's approving countenance ever shines upon it; and in this blessed light the obedient soul finds the most triumphant answer to all the reproaches of those who talk in high

sounding words about breadth of mind, liberality of thought, freedom of opinion, progress, development, and such-like. The obedient child of God can afford to put up with all this, because he feels and knows, he believes and is sure, that he is treading a path indicated for him by the precious Word of God. He is not careful to explain or apologize, feeling assured that those who object, oppose, and reproach are utterly incapable of understanding or appreciating his explanation. And, moreover, he feels that it is no part of his duty to explain or defend. He has but to obey; and as for objectors and oppressors, he has but to refer, them to his Master.

This makes it all so simple, so plain, so certain. It delivers the heart from a thousand difficulties and perplexities. If we were to set about replying to all who undertake to raise questions or start difficulties, our whole life would be spent in the profitless task. We may rest assured the best possible answer to all infidel objectors, is the steady, earnest, onward path of unqualified obedience. Let us leave infidels, skeptics, and rationalists to their own worthless theories, while we, with unswerving purpose and firm step pursue that blessed path of childlike obedience which, like the shining light, shines more and more unto the perfect day. Thus shall our minds be kept tranquil, for the peace of God which passes all understanding shall garrison our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. When the Word of God which is settled forever in heaven is hidden deep down in our hearts, there will be a calm certainty, a holy stability, and a marked progress in our Christian career, which will afford the best possible answer to the gainsayer, the most effectual testimony to the truth of God, and the most convincing evidence and solid confirmation to every wavering heart.

In Deut. 4:2 we have a sentence or two which should be deeply engraved on the tablets of every Christian's heart. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it."

These words involve two grand facts with regard to the Word of God. It is not to be added to, for the simplest of all reasons, because there is nothing lacking. It is not to be diminished, because there is nothing superfluous. Everything we want is there, and nothing that is there can be done without. "Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Pro. 30:6. To suppose that aught can be added to God's Word is, upon the very face of it, to deny that it is God's Word; and, on the other hand, if we admit that it is the Word of God, then it follows of necessity -blessed necessity-that we could not afford to do without a single sentence of it. There would be a blank in the volume which no human hand could fill up, if a single clause were dropped from its place in the canon. We have all we need; and hence, we must not add. We need it all; and hence, we must not diminish.

How deeply important is all this, in this day of human tampering with the Word of God! How blessed to know that we have in our possession a Book so divinely perfect that not a sentence, not a clause, not a word can be added to it. We speak not, of course, of translations or versions, but of the Scriptures as originally given of God-His own perfect revelation. To this not a touch can be given. As well might a human finger have dared to touch the creation of God, on the morning when all the sons of God sang together, as to add a jot or a tittle to the inspired Word of God. And, on the other hand, to take away a jot or a tittle from it, is to say that the Holy Ghost has penned what was unnecessary. Thus the holy volume is divinely guarded at both ends. It is securely fenced round about so that no rude hand should touch its sacred contents.

What! it may be said in reply, Do you mean to say that every sentence from the opening lines of Genesis to the close of Revelation is divinely inspired? Yes; that is precisely the ground we take. We claim for every line within the covers of the volume a divine origin. To question this is to attack the very pillars of the Christian faith. A single flaw in the canon would be sufficient to prove it not of God. To touch a single stone in the arch is to bring down the whole fabric in ruins around us. "Every scripture is divinely inspired, and" (J.N.D. Trans.) - being so, must be - "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3:16.

The stronghold must on no account be surrendered. It must be tenaciously held, in the face of every infidel assault. If it be given up, all is hopelessly lost. We have nothing to lean upon. Either the Word of God is perfect, or we are left without any divine foundation for our faith. If there be a word too much or a word too little in the revelation which God has given us, then verily we are left like a ship without compass, rudder, or chart, to be drifted about on the wild, tumultuous ocean of infidel thought. In short, if we have not an absolutely perfect revelation, we are of all men most miserable.

But we may still be challenged with such a question as this: Do you believe that the long string of names in the opening chapters of 1 Chronicles-those genealogical tables- are divinely inspired? and, if so, what are we to learn from them? We unhesitatingly declare our reverent belief in the divine inspiration of all these; and we have no doubt whatever but that their value, interest, and importance will be fully proved by-and-by in the history of that people to whom they specially apply.

And then as to what we are to learn from those genealogical records, we believe they teach us a most precious lesson as to Jehovah's faithful care of His people Israel, and His loving interest in them and in all that concerns them. He watches over them from generation to generation, even though

they are scattered and lost to human view. He knows all about "the twelve tribes," and He will manifest them in due time, and plant them in their destined inheritance, in the land of Canaan, according to His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Now is not all this full of blessed instruction for us? Is it not full of comfort for our souls? Is it not most confirmatory of our faith to mark the gracious painstaking of our God, His minute care and vigilance, in reference to His earthly people? Most assuredly it is. And ought not our hearts to be interested in all that interests the heart of our Father? Are we not to take an interest in anything save what directly concerns ourselves? Where is there a loving child who would not take an interest in all his father's concerns, and delight to read every line that drops from his father's pen?

And, finally, above and beyond all, we must remember that we are not competent to judge what is and what is not worthy of a place in the inspired canon. We are ignorant and shortsighted; and the very portion which we might deem beneath the dignity of inspiration may have some very important bearing upon the history of God's ways with the world at large, or with His people in particular.

In short, it simply resolves itself into this, with every truly pious soul, with every spiritual mind-we reverently believe in the divine inspiration of every line in our precious Bible, from beginning to

end. And we believe this not on the ground of any human authority whatsoever. To believe in Holy Scripture because it comes to us accredited by any authority upon earth, would be to set that authority above Holy Scripture, inasmuch as that which guarantees has more weight, more value, than the thing guaranteed. Hence we should no more think of looking to human authority to confirm the Word of God, than we should of bringing out a rush light to prove that the sun is shining.

No, reader, we must be clear and decided as to this. It must be, in the judgment of our souls, a great cardinal truth which we hold dearer than life itself-the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture. Thus shall we have wherewithal to answer the cool audacity of modern skepticism, rationalism, and infidelity. We do not mean to say that we shall be able to convince infidels. God will deal with them in His own way, and convince them with His own unanswerable arguments, in His own time. It is labor and time lost to argue with such men. But we feel persuaded that the most dignified and effective answer to infidelity, in its every phase, will be found in the calm repose of the heart that rests in the blessed assurance that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." And again, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15:4. The former of these precious quotations proves that Scripture has come from God; the latter, that it has come to us. Both together go to prove that we must neither add to nor take from the Word of God. There is nothing lacking, and nothing superfluous. The Lord be praised for this solid foundation truth, and for all the comfort and consolation that flows from it to every true believer.

Precision

"What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Rom. 8:3. Mark the marvelous precision of Scripture. It does not say, "in the likeness of flesh," for then He would not have been a real man at all. Neither does it say, "in sinful flesh," for then He could not be a perfect Savior. His humanity was as real as it was pure and spotless. All homage to His peerless name! Universal and everlasting praise to His glorious Person!

Purpose of Heart

"Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Deut. 6:5. Here lies the secret of all true practical godliness. Without this all is valueless to God. "My son, give Me thine heart." Where the heart is given, all will be right. The heart may be compared to the regulator of a watch which acts on the hairspring, and the hairspring acts on the mainspring, and the mainspring acts on the hands as they move around the dial. If your watch goes wrong, it will not do merely to alter the hands; you must touch the regulator. God looks for real heart work, blessed be His name! His word to us is, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." 1 John 3:18.

How we ought to bless Him for such touching words! They do so reveal His own loving heart to us. Assuredly, He loved us in deed and in truth; and He cannot be satisfied with anything else, whether in our ways with Him or our ways one with another. All must flow straight from the heart.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart" - at the very source of all the issues of life. This is peculiarly precious. Whatever is in the heart comes out through the lips, and in the life. How important then to have the heart full of the Word of God, so full that we shall have no room for the vanities and follies of this present evil world. Thus shall our conversation be always with grace, seasoned with salt. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Hence we can judge of what is in the heart by what comes out of the mouth. The tongue is the organ of the heart - the organ of the man. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Matt. 12:35. When the heart is really governed by the Word of God, the whole character reveals the blessed result. It must be so, inasmuch as the heart is the mainspring of our entire moral condition; it lies at the center of all those moral influences which govern our personal history and shape our practical career.

In every part of the divine volume we see how much importance God attaches to the attitude and state of the heart, with respect to Him or to His Word, which is one and the same thing. When the heart is true to Him, all is sure to come right; but, on the other hand, we shall find that where the heart grows cold and careless as to God and His truth, there will, sooner or later, be open departure from the path of truth and righteousness. There is, therefore, much force and value in the exhortation addressed by Barnabas to the converts at Antioch: he "exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23).

How needful then, now, always! This "purpose of heart" is most precious to God. It is what we may venture to call the grand moral regulator. It imparts a lovely earnestness to the Christian character, which is greatly to be coveted by all of us. It is a divine antidote against coldness, deadness, and formality, all of which are so hateful to God. The outward life may be very correct, and the creed may be very orthodox; but if the earnest purpose of heart be lacking-the affectionate cleaving of the whole moral being to God and His Christ - all is utterly worthless.

It is through the heart that the Holy Ghost instructs us. Hence, the Apostle prayed for the saints at Ephesus that the eyes of their "understanding [heart; J.N.D. Trans.]" might be "enlightened." And again, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

Thus we see how all Scripture is in perfect harmony with the exhortation recorded in Deut. 6:5, 6. "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." How near this would have kept them to their covenant God! How safe too from all evil, and specially from the abominable evil of idolatry - their national sin - their terrible besetment! If Jehovah's precious words had only found their right place in the heart, there would have been little fear of Baal, Chemosh, or Ashtoreth. In a word, all the idols of the heathen would have found their right place, and been estimated at their true value, if only the word of Jehovah had been allowed to dwell in Israel's heart.

And be it specially noted here how beautifully characteristic all this is of the book of Deuteronomy. It is not so much a question of keeping up a certain order of religious observances, the offering of sacrifices, or attention to rites and ceremonies. All these things, no doubt, had their place; but they are, by no means, the prominent or paramount thing in Deuteronomy. No; THE WORD is the all-important matter here. It is Jehovah's word in Israel's heart.

The reader must seize this fact if he really desires to possess the key to the lovely book of Deuteronomy. It is not a book of ceremonial; it is a book of moral and affectionate obedience. It teaches, in almost every section, that invaluable lesson that the heart that loves, prizes, and honors the Word of God is ready for every act of obedience, whether it be the offering of a sacrifice or the observance of a day. It might so happen that an Israelite would find himself in a place, and under circumstances, in which a rigid adherence to rites and ceremonies would be impossible; but he never could be in a place or in circumstances in which he could not love, reverence, and obey the Word of God. Let him go where he would; let him be carried as a captive exile to the ends of the earth, nothing could rob him of the high privilege of uttering and acting on those blessed words, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:11.

Precious words! They contain in their brief compass the great principle of the book of Deuteronomy; and we may add, the great principle of the divine life at all times and in all places. It can never lose its moral force and value. It always holds good. It was true in the days of the patriarchs; true for Israel in the land; true for Israel scattered to the ends of the earth; true for the Church as a whole; true for each individual believer amid the Church's hopeless ruins. In a word, obedience is always the creature's holy duty and exalted privilege - simple, unhesitating, unqualified obedience to the Word of the Lord. This is an unspeakable mercy for which we may well praise our God day and night. He has given us His Word, blessed be His name, and He exhorts us to let that Word dwell in us richly - dwell in our hearts, and assert its holy sway over our entire course and character.

Reconciliation: What Is It?

The testimony of Scripture is as distinct as possible on this great question. It never speaks of God being reconciled to us. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom. 5:10). It does not say that God was reconciled to us. The death of Christ was essential to the reconciliation; but man was the enemy of God and needed to be reconciled. So we read in Col. 1:21, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled." The ground of this is stated in the previous verse to be "the blood of His cross." So also in 2 Cor. 5:19, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." It does not say, "reconciling Himself to the world."

Thus, to anyone who bows to Scripture - as everyone ought - the truth is as clear as a sunbeam. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." And not only gave Him, but bruised Him on the cross. "It pleased the LORD [Jehovah] to bruise Him." It is of the utmost importance to maintain the true aspect of God's nature and character in the presentation of the gospel. To say that Christ died to reconcile the Father to us, is to falsify the divine character, as seen in the mission and death of His Son. God was not man's enemy, but his friend. True, sin had to be condemned; God's truth, holiness, and majesty had to be vindicated. All this was done, in a divine way, in the cross, where we read, at once, God's hatred of sin and His love to the sinner.

Atonement is the necessary basis of reconciliation; but it is of the very last importance to see that it is God who reconciles us to Himself. This He does, blessed forever be His holy name, at no less a cost than "the death of His Son." Such was His love to man - His kindness - His goodness - His deep compassion, that, when there was no other possible way - sin being in question - in which man, the guilty enemy and rebel, could be reconciled to God, He gave His Son from His bosom; "made Him to be sin for us"; bruised Him for our iniquities on Calvary's cursed tree. Eternal and universal homage to His name!

Oh! beloved reader, should not all this magnificent display of love and grace draw and bind our hearts to our ever-gracious God in sweetest confidence - banish all our fears and forebodings, and fill our souls with a liberty and peace that not all the power of earth and hell, men and devils, can disturb?

A Record of God's Grace and Holiness: Paul's Preaching at Antioch

"Now when Paul and his company... departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought He them out of it." Acts 13:13-17. (Read carefully through verse 41.)

As Paul and Barnabas entered the synagogue at Antioch, they were invited, after the reading of the law and the prophets, to give the people a word of exhortation. Paul had readiness to address them in his heart, for he carried and represented the gospel of God, that system of divine active love that is ever waiting on sinners. But when out of the abundance of such a heart his mouth speaks, it is in such a way as the synagogue could not have expected. He does not make the people his subject, giving them exhortations as out of the law or the prophets, but he makes God and His acts his subjects out of the historical books. He details a series of divine acts from the day of the exodus to the resurrection of Jesus (acts of grace, every one of them), in which God had been rising up in the supremacy of His own love and power over all the various sad and evil conditions of Israel, whether such had been brought on them by themselves or by their enemies; through their own folly and wickedness or by the hand of them that hated them.

He deals with facts-such facts as displayed God in grace, and humbled man. He brings God into the synagogue, and makes Him the great object of notice to the soul. And this, let me say, is God's own way in the gospel. He makes room for Himself, as I may express it, in both our hearts and our consciences. He breaks us to pieces, leaving us without a word to say for ourselves, exposed, convicted, and condemned, that He may introduce His own salvation to the conscience and to the heart- that the one may find peace made by Himself for it, and the other be forever drinking of a love that flows to everlasting, as it has been flowing from everlasting.

This story of grace which Paul rehearsed in the synagogue at Antioch brings out various actings of God's hand in behalf of His people. After choosing the fathers, He had of old delivered Israel out of Egypt in spite of Egypt's strength and enmity. He had then carried them through the wilderness for the space of forty years, well supplying all their need in spite of their manners and their murmurings. Then He had beaten down the nations of Canaan before their faces, and divided their lands among them. After that He had raised up a long line of judges, or deliverers, for them, to deliver them out of the hand of those oppressors whom their own folly and faithlessness had armed against them. And still further, He had given them David, a man of His own choice, to be their shepherd after they had proved the bitterness of the days of Saul, who had been the man of their choice. Thus in so Many ways, and for so long a time, had He magnified His grace, and continued in it, unwearied by t heir need, changeful as it was; and unhindered by their faithlessness, persevering and rebellious as it was.

With this tale of grace, Paul fills the synagogue at Antioch. But there was still another chapter in that story. Jesus the Messiah had been given to the nation, and was refused and crucified by the nation, but was by God raised up and given again to them; and, in the name of this crucified and risen Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is now preached, and Israel called on to accept it.

Now this was a tale of the constancy and variousness of the grace of God. Israel is seen to have enjoyed a series of accomplished blessings at the hand of God. Redemption, support, victory, deliverance, and a kingdom-all had been theirs in spite of the strength of enemies, and of their own unfaithfulness. And now, added to these, there was provision for the forgiveness of all their sins.

And blessed to tell it, this crowning mercy, the forgiveness of sins which Paul now preached, was a blessing as sure as any, established by as sure an arm, and made theirs by as clear a title. It was set upon the resurrection of Jesus. Redemption, and inheritance, and deliverance, and the like, had been, each and all in their day, infallible, and each and all in their turn and time enjoyed by Israel. And all had stood on solid ground and in good warranty. The rod of Moses, adapted by the God of all power and might, was equal to work redemption, and Israel enjoyed redemption. The presence of God had supplied the camp, and the sword of the Lord in the hand of Joshua had conquered and divided the land. Judges could deliver from all oppressors, since the Lord of heaven and earth had raised them up; and the man after God's own heart had guided the flock of God with integrity and skillfulness. And now "the forgiveness of sins" takes its place among these blessings, for Jesus in resurrection in like infallibility can secure and dispense it. The manna from heaven had no more virtue to feed the camp morning by morning-and who could question that?-than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus has to publish the forgiveness of sins to all that believe. Death is the wages of sin, and cannot be put away, but by sin being put away. To get rid of death we must get rid of sin. But Jesus had risen. He was alive from the dead and on the ground of such a fact as that, of such accomplished victory as His resurrection bespeaks, the forgiveness of sins is as infallibly named, as surely and boldly published, as redemption was wrought by the rod of Moses, or victory and the division of the land by the sword of the Lord, and of Joshua.

Forgiveness of sins thus takes its place among the sure and accomplished blessings of grace. We can account for it as simply as for any of those wrought out of old for Israel by Jehovah. We can see why sins may now be forgiven, as once we saw why Pharaoh's host lay dead on the seashore. Jehovah looked from the cloud then, and that was enough; Jesus is risen from the dead now, having been made sin for us, and that is enough. The danger is in despising - as the Apostle closes his preaching, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." This was the Apostle's exhortation.

The law and the prophets had been read in the synagogue, as we noticed, and the apostles were invited to give the people a word of exhortation. But Paul read to the synagogue from the history of Israel. He stated facts, God's facts, such as told what He had done for His people, and thus what He was to them. And his exhortation is, not to despise those acts of grace. The resurrection is one of those acts. Jesus, had died to sin. On the cross He owned the claim and fruit of sin, and answered it, and bore it. Sin was never, we may say, in so intense a sense, the sting of death as

then; nor was death ever, in so solemn a judgment, paid as the wages of sin. But armed as it was in that hour of its power, it was slain. Sin was put away. The veil of the temple was rent, and the graves of the saints were opened. "Made sin, He sin o'erthrew." The claims of God in judgment upon sin were all vindicated, and he that had the power of death was annulled. So we may well say, with our Apostle, looking at the death and resurrection of Jesus, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

The preaching at Antioch thus gives us a sweet witness of how grace has been abounding in the ways of God from the beginning hitherto. But for further confirmation of our souls in God, let me observe that both holiness and grace have had their several witnesses from the beginning; for God cannot but be just, while He is a justifier; and the stability and rest of our consciences before Him come from this, that "truth" and "mercy," "righteousness" and "peace," together dispense salvation to us. God is never more holy than when forgiving sins, as has been long since said.

The ordinance of clean and unclean told of God's holiness from the beginning, separating Him from the fallen and defiled creation. This ordinance, we know, is recognized as early as Genesis 8; His promise had already witnessed His grace, and that we get in Genesis 3. And so all through, that He is a just God and a Savior, has been His memorial here. He has ever had His two witnesses in this world of corruption and of misery - a witness to His holiness, and a witness to His grace and goodness. And the cross has redeemed all these pledges, for clean and unclean were distinguished there, and separated forever; and yet forgiveness of sins was secured, and the soul ruined of old by the serpent is delivered forever.

Thus Paul brings God into the synagogue. The rulers would have had the people exhorted, but the Spirit in the Apostle will have God revealed - revealed too, as is His way, by His own acts - that simplest, surest, most blessed way of revealing Him - the way in which "the wayfaring man" may not err, in which a child may not mistake the lesson. It is not by treatises or discourses, but by acts, that God makes Himself known to us. We might miss our lesson, had the former been His method; but His method is such that the simpler we are, the surer we shall reach Him and find Him and know Him. And Paul thus deals with the synagogue at Antioch. He brings God in, Christ in, and that too in the divine way, in the light and revelation of His doings in the midst of us and for us. The law and the prophets had already been in the synagogue, as Moses and Elias were on the holy hill. But the voice from the exalted glory would draw Peter away from Moses and Elias, and fix him on Jesus, saying, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him," when Peter would have made equal tabernacles for Moses and Elias; and so here, Paul would leave the law and the prophets, and fix the assembly on God and His Christ.

And what was thus done in the synagogue at Antioch is not only like what had been already done on the holy hill, but it is after the manner of the divine wisdom in all dispensations from the beginning, that the Christ of God should be the great object of faith, and the one great issue and result of all the education and learning of our souls - that we should be brought to Him, and then left with Him.

Rejoice Evermore

It is the Lord's mind that His children should now, even in this world of sorrow and death, be happy. He has not only created us in Christ Jesus, but we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him, and the Holy Spirit says,

"Rejoice evermore." 1 Thess. 5:16. "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." Phil. 4:4.

The source of our happiness then is the Lord Himself; and the secret of happiness is believing on Him whom we see not (1 Pet. 1:8).

The measure of happiness we are entitled to enjoy is as unlimited and boundless as glory itself—"joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Jesus desired that we might have His joy fulfilled in ourselves, and Scripture is written that our "joy might be full" (John 15:11).

The Searching Eye of Christ

Can I connect all the sorrows of the wilderness with Christ's glory? Have I set up as my banner, "To me to live is Christ"? Do I devote myself and all I have to Christ's glory, turning everything into an occasion for magnifying Him?

If my heart is breaking, what matters it, if I have Christ? - He loves a broken heart. His heart cares for me, as no mother cares for her child. Every throb of your heart is known to Him, and He beautifully knows how to show you how all-able He is to give you rest and a peace that passes all understanding. And if you are broken down bit by bit, it is only to fit you for the place He has prepared for you. There is, for the heart that is resting in Christ's love, a perfect repose, a divine peace, that Satan cannot shake. You will be wondering at your peace; you will be able to say of things that destroy the dearest hopes of your heart, I thank God.

In the Person with whom I have to do, I have the Word of God, the blessed Lord, the glory of whose Person is set forth in the revelation. And if I am in that Christ of God, in whom was never a waver in doing God's will, it will bring me down to the very bottom of self. If He does know individually everything in me, He knows it by the perfect contrast it is of all in Himself. Have you cultivated an acquaintance with the heart-searching Word, who looks down into the very bottom of your heart, who discovers the first budding of everything wrong, and puts His hand to stop it? If He has to do with a redeemed people, how far does He find each one a vessel fitted for Him to dwell in?

If there is a corner of my heart that Christ has not searched down to the very bottom, I am undone. Would I have a blind Christ, one whom I should not like to search out every part of my heart? Ah! I would rather have Christ pointing out everything, than friends praising. I adore God that gave Him to me. Who am I, that my Lord should so condescend to search me? And where there is evil in me, that is just where God lets His streams flow into me. He sees everything that hinders and chokes - would I stay His hand?

The reason of little growth in practical holiness and unearthliness, is that the heart is not abiding in the light of the searching eye of Christ in heaven, and making the whole value of it come right down to the very bottom of everything. There can be no power of blessing save that which begins with Christ, that which throws us (in the light) upon the heart of Jesus, upon the love that knows how to give sympathy in everything - the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, that love from which nothing can separate us. All the divine glory beams down on us in the face of Jesus Christ; we are in Him, and have such fellowship with Him that what is true of the Head, as to God's delight being in Him, is true of the members. The great thing that gives liberty to the heart is the knowing its connection with a risen and ascended Lord, and so being able to stand, counting on the love of God in Him. There is in the heart of the Lord Jesus the full throbbing of that love, as He looks upon us as those given Him of the Father - a divine savor and fullness in it, because of its being the love of God - a perfectly divine love which lays hold of each individual as one given Him of the Father - a love which never changes, and from which nothing in heaven or earth can

separate.

Separation From the World

What does it really mean for a Christian to be separate from the world? I suppose that this subject has been one of first importance since the very beginning of Christianity, but at no time in the history of the Church has it had more significance than now. This should be, therefore, of vital interest to every believer.

Separation was the indispensable prerequisite for the survival and victory of the children of Israel. This divine principle has never changed.

We are told that God's people "mingled themselves"

(Ezra 9:2) with the ungodly about them. The sad result was dishonor to God, defeat, and slavery. The Hebrew word for "mingled" means to braid. In braiding, various threads are woven together until they are intertwined into one pattern. This is what happened to Israel: they became so like the heathen surrounding them that they forfeited their true place of separation as God's people.

How great is the pressure today on young people - and on older ones also - to conform! Assaults come from all directions, designed to pull the Christian down to the low level of those who have their "portion in this life." There is not any aspect of our life, whether it be in deportment or habits, school or business, that does not come under the outright or insidious attacks of the world.

Are you and I distinguishable from all this, or have we too become part of the pattern? If the latter, our testimony is worthless, the salt has lost its savor, and there is also loss of blessing in our lives.

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you" (2 Cor. 6:17, 18). This is the clear voice of the Word of God. There is no thought here of the Christian retiring into a monastery, but a distinct affirmation that although we are in the world, we are not of it.

The question is, Do we have the heart to bow to the authority of the Scriptures? Or do we seek to dodge the issue and use for a pretext the truth that all is of grace, when the Scriptures condemn things that we allow in our lives?

In that wonderful chapter, John 14, there is no service mentioned beyond that of obedience as the proof of love. If I truly love, I obey. The more I delight in the Father's love to me, the more I shall reject what the world offers. No two affections can be more opposite than love for God and love of the world. They cannot both occupy the same throne in our hearts (see 1 John 2:15, 16).

The believer proves himself false to Christ to the very same degree that he seeks the friendship of the world.

The world - the system itself - may concede something to us if we, in turn, concede something to it, but it can never give what God values. When a Christian receives something from the world, it will be at the sacrifice of faithfulness.

One has said, We are never wiser than Scripture. We cannot "touch" the "unclean thing" without contracting defilement. If we consider in Scripture histories of some of its "strong" men, we discover that small beginnings lead to fearful consequences - some that cause injury to oneself, some to others who are witnessing, and some that stumble the unconverted.

There are those who would set rigid rules and boundaries as to exactly what we are to be separated from. Such cold distinctions are really of no value. Often too our natural hearts yearn for a book of rules to which we might refer for direction, without the necessity of exercise of heart to discern the path.

Is not simple obedience what is needed? The more that we, as believers, walk in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, the more accurate will become our judgment as to what is of the world. And, really, the answer is plain: whatever is "not of the Father." If we are grieving the Spirit of God in some open or secret way in our lives, we shall not have that freshness of affection and tender heart and conscience that loves His Word and delights to bow to it.

In the soon-coming "day of Christ" there will be no choices to make; the redeemed will be with and like Him. But there is conflict now - a time of testing our affections. Do we "declare plainly" that we seek another "country... that is, a heavenly"? What are our habits? With whom do we "mingle"?

In the day of His glory, our Lord will show His appreciation for the faithfulness of those who have lived and longed for Him, while others devoted themselves to other objects. May we then covet to hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

In the brief time we have remaining to us, may we seek grace to be faithfully representing the "Man in the glory." And may our lives give moral weight to the words that we speak. "He giveth more grace" (Jas. 4:6).

Sorrow's Four Lands

The natural man would perhaps say there is no blessing in sorrow, but not the spiritual man. An old writer suggests that sorrow can lead us into one of four lands: the barren land in which we try to escape from it; the broken land in which we sink under it; the bitter land in which we resent it; or the better land in which we bear it, and in which, while bearing it, we become a blessing to others. J.W.B.

Spiritual Strength: Something That Has Waned

No one will deny, and very many will sorrowfully own, that Christian vitality is at a low ebb. On the one hand, there are numbers of true Christians scattered over the land; on the other, Christian life expresses itself but feebly. The doctrines of grace are widely known; great and glorious truths are on the lips of multitudes, but the practical exposition of the truth is but little manifested. A few years ago the truth of the coming of the Lord was, comparatively speaking, strange to evangelical Christendom; here and there one rejoiced in it; now thousands accept this truth. The believer's standing in a risen and ascended Christ, not so long ago, was almost unknown language to multitudes of God's people who at this present day accept the fact of this as their position. We might enumerate other truths, now generally received, which a few years ago were only recognized by a handful of God's people. In the presence of unquestionable evidence we have the acknowledged fact of knowledge widely distributed, and also of spiritual vigor feebly existing.

Perhaps the solution to this anxious question may be indicated by the way in which truth is laid hold of. The few gained it by prayerful search, and by digging into the treasures of God's Word for themselves; the many gain it by the means of availing themselves of the labor of the few. The number of Bible students is not large. That is but little valued which costs but little to acquire. Again, there is a vast difference between laying hold of the truth, and being laid hold of by it. The truth makes free those whom it actually holds. The truth is strong, and strengthens our spirits.

There is, however, beyond these things a grave reality to which we now desire to call our reader's attention; that is, the little spiritual power one finds in himself, and also around him. It is the fact that truth is frequently taken up into the soul apart from Christ - not that any Christian is without Christ, for he is in Christ and Christ is in him, but in the sense that "without Me ye can do nothing," truth may be acquired.

There are saints of God knowing their position in Christ, who are like men brought into a palace and told that the palace and its glories are theirs, and who rove from, room to room astonished at its wonders. There are others who, upon being brought into the palace, fix their affectionate longings upon the one who is its joy. We shall not value less the glories of the place into which we are brought, because we value more and more the Person of the Lord, who is the glory of the place.

Now it must ever be to the law and to the testimony, in the Word and by the Word, that the remedy shall be seen and administered by the Holy Spirit. We would then inquire whether the moral beauties and excellencies of the life of Jesus are sufficiently engaging our attention. Surely we are set in the palace of heavenly blessings in Christ, that we may better know and appreciate Himself. It is easier to comprehend doctrine about Christ, than to be filled with the loveliness of His ways. We need, beloved, to have the evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) more in our hearts, and not their histories as unfoldings of God's dispensational ways merely, but as life-words, bringing to our souls the Person of Jesus.

"The life... of Jesus"! How great is the moral glory of His silence when He answered His accusers never one word. Even Pilate, the Gentile governor, "marveled greatly." Herod hoped to see some miracle wrought by the meek and lowly One; he hoped to witness a mark of external power, but the silence of Jesus before him was power more wonderful still. Herod was blind to the glory, and he and his men of war set the lowly One at naught and robed Him in gorgeous mockery, and then sent Him back to Pilate. But this silence of Jesus commands our adoring worship. And do we not read, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." 2 Cor. 4:10. Were His death truly reckoned on ourselves, His life would express itself, though feebly, we own, in our bodies.

Behold Him at the grave which He came to empty of the beloved brother of Martha and Mary. See the tears flow down His face, and note His groans. Thus do our hearts learn by the life of Jesus to weep with those who weep. There do we obtain from Himself the treasure of His sympathy. Brethren, how softened would our spirits become if we held more company with the Lord. The Jews said, "Behold how He loved Him!" The Master's tears and sighs touched even their hearts. O for bowels of Christ - His who fills the palace of God's glory with everlasting luster, and who fills broken hearts below with peace. It is only as in company with Him, and as bearing about in our bodies His death, that the life of Jesus shall be manifested in us.

Yet, without this manifestation, what is our Christianity? The religious world has its Christless Christianity; may not we be in a like danger? It is really futile to have knowledge at our fingers' ends if Christ be not flowing out in our lives. The perfect Man knew no jealous feelings, and this bane of God's servants will be abolished from their souls so long as they bear about in their bodies "the dying of the Lord Jesus." The simple reason why Christian vitality is at so low an ebb, is because there is so little of personal dealing with Christ Himself.

We must get back to the gospels, beloved, if we would walk as Christ walked. It is in the evangelists that we trace His steps. God grant us to study Him in His thoughts, His words, and His ways; to consider Him in His sighs and His tears, in His peace and His joy; to engage our whole souls with Him in His relationship to His God and Father, and in His ministry below. Our ambition should be that the life of Jesus should be manifested in our mortal bodies. To attain to this we must know what the life of Jesus is; and to do this, we must get into the very atmosphere of the four gospels.

The epistles teach us what it is to bear, about in our bodies His dying. Perhaps we are familiar with this doctrine. We know that He has died, and that we have died with Him; such is our liberty - marvelous and most wonderful liberty-freedom from self - self gone in the grave of Christ. Yes, beloved, but how shall we deal with this liberty in relation to our state? Ah! then the question is personal and practical. How, indeed? How shall we bear about in our body His dying, when the flesh would not keep silence? Try it; yes, try it, and see how much you know practically of a crucified Jesus. Bring this to bear upon the worries of daily life, on life's cares and follies, and see how much Christian vitality you possess. It is in proportion to the extent of your manifestation of the life of Jesus.

Heat, clamor, evil-speaking, uncharitableness, an overbearing spirit, all witness to the little Christian vigor that exists. Many, who have physical strength sufficient to roll away the stone of Lazarus' grave, lack the spiritual ability to weep with broken hearts. We need a humbler and more

Christ-like Christianity. We need to go to the four gospels, brethren, for Christ. It would be a happy thing, indeed, if having by grace been brought into the glorious place of our heavenly privilege in Christ, our enjoyed privilege was to be solely engaged with Christ Himself, and "so to walk, even as He walked."

The Testimony of the Four Gospels

The four gospels are coincident testimonies to the Lord Jesus Christ, and valuable as such. But we are not to read them as merely explanatory or supplemental. We get a complete view of our Lord Jesus Christ, only by discerning their distinctness in character and purpose.

Even in the histories of men we may perceive this. One biographer may give us the man in his domestic, another in his political, life; but in order to our being fully acquainted with him, we must see him in both of these, and perhaps in many other connections. And one of such biographers will not only select particular facts, but notice distinct circumstances in the same facts. We see the same thing in the four gospels. And if we know, if not the necessity, at least the desirableness, of this, when a mere man is the theme, how much more may we expect to find it so when we have rehearsed to us the ways of One who fills such a blessed variety of relationships, both to God and man, as the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost, who spake by the prophets and other ancient and holy penmen of Scripture, had done this before the times of the evangelists. In the first book of Chronicles, for instance, we see David in a light different from that in which we see him in the book of Samuel. In the books of Samuel we get his history generally; but in the first book of Chronicles we see him not in all the events of his life, as in Samuel, but in those scenes and actions which constituted him a type of the Lord who is David's Son. And so, in the second book of Chronicles, as to Solomon. We do not get his full history there, as in the first book of Kings. All his sins are passed by, for it was not as his historian that the Spirit of God was employing the pen of the scribe while tracing Solomon in the Chronicles. He was rather setting him forth as the type of that greater Son of David, and King of Israel, in His full beauty, the boast of His own people, and the Object of the whole earth's desire.

All this is only fullness and variety, and not incongruity; and we should have grace to admire the perfection of the wisdom of God, in His holy oracles, in this. And as to the ways of the blessed Lord which are in this variety, given to us, I need not say that all is perfection. Whether it be this path or that which He takes before us -whatever relationship He sustains - whatever affection fills His soul - though different, all is perfect. He may pass before us in " the conscious elevation of the Son of God, or in the sympathies of the Son of man; we may see Him in Jewish connection, in Matthew's Gospel; or more widely abroad, as among men, in Luke's Gospel; as the Servant of the varied need of sinners, in Mark's Gospel; or as the solitary Stranger from heaven, in John's Gospel; still, all is perfection. And to discern and trace this, is at once the disciple's profit and delight. "Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them." Psalm 119:129.

There Is a Saviour in Glory

God has visited this world, has manifested Himself in the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He came down from glory on this heavenly mission of making known to man all the grace and love that was in the heart of His Father.

He veiled His glory, and took upon Himself the form of a man - the most gracious, the most accessible of men. "Never spake man like this man," His enemies confessed. He carried with Him that which poor lost man could get nowhere else. The only man that could ever stand upon this earth and say, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What an announcement to make? He had more; He had life - eternal life - for man, but man would not come to Him that he might have this life - this everlasting life.

This blessed One was hated "without a cause." He was "the light of the world," and this did not suit man; for men "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Hence they did not rest until they had got rid of this Jesus, so that they might go on undisturbed in their own path of iniquity. A robber was preferable to Jesus the Son of God. Their cry was, "Away with Him, crucify Him." But the blessed God made this crowning act of man's hatred against Himself to be the only way of salvation; and where man made this blessed One a martyr, there God made Him to be a victim; and the precious blood that flowed from the side of that crucified Christ gave God eternal satisfaction about sin. That precious blood was of such infinite value in God's sight that the sinner, be he who he may, that rests in the value of this blood to God, is cleansed from every stain. Thus, where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded (Rom. 5:20, 21).

But, dear reader, that blessed One that died upon the tree now sits upon the throne in glory! God raised Him from the dead, and has exalted Him, having declared that at the name of Jesus "every knee should bow,... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:10, 11.

Each soul must have an interview with Him, either now in grace, or presently in judgment.

The dying thief had an interview with Him when He hung upon the cross.

Saul, the enemy of Jesus, had an interview with Him when He was in heavenly glory - the same Jesus, but in different circumstances. The thief turned to the Savior on the cross, owned his true condition, and asked to be remembered in the coming kingdom. The Savior's answer to his cry was, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Saul, on the other hand, on his way to Damascus, endeavoring to wipe out the memory of the name of Jesus from the earth, was met by that same Jesus in heavenly glory.

What a contrast between Paul and the Lord Jesus! the one full of hatred against Christ, the other full of grace toward Saul. The Savior asked him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

Saul, tell Him why!

Saul, in the light of that glory, fell to the ground and exclaimed, "Who art Thou, Lord?" The answer was, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Not one word of reproof fell from the Savior's lips. What a reception was this for Saul! His course on earth was changed. No longer the persecutor of the saints of God, but henceforth to be an ambassador for that Savior here, and a preacher of Him as glad tidings among the nations (Gal. 1:16). He announced what that Savior is in Himself as glad tidings to those around him.

And we declare not only what that Savior has done - how He has finished the work of salvation, that He has paid an adequate price for the salvation of all (1 Tim. 2), and that God is satisfied with that work which He accomplished on the cross, having raised Him up from among the dead - but also declare what He is Himself. If any soul wants rest, peace, righteousness, life, all are found in Christ in glory.

To refuse present grace is to incur future judgment, and then there will be no mercy. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake, for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 4:5, 6.

Things Written Aforetime: Written for Our Learning

Some people have mistakenly thought that the Bible is simply a collection of historical material; this is not correct, for there is much history that it passes over entirely, or that it touches but very briefly, while it contains detailed accounts of things which would not rate a line in men's histories. For instance, Alexander the Great and all his mighty exploits are but meagerly mentioned. In Daniel 8, his rise, his conquests, and his decease are covered in about 5 verses; but God often enlarges on some personal, or domestic scene. In Genesis, God takes up the history of a man by the name of Abraham, and devotes almost fourteen chapters to it. Why is this? The answer is to be found in these words: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." Rom. 15:4. God has some lessons to teach us in this record of Abraham, if we have ears to hear.

Now let us examine some parts of the life of Abraham. In Genesis 22 we find God testing his faith. God had given him a son in his old age, and Abraham loved him dearly - his only son. In this chapter God instructs him to go to a certain place and offer this beloved son as a burnt offering - what a great test of faith and obedience! It must have torn Abraham's heart very much, but he started out in simple obedience to do as he had been told. God, however, stopped him short of actually offering his son, and provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac.

The testing of Abraham is often mentioned by infidels as though God sanctioned the offering of human sacrifices, but this is not true. God stoutly condemned any such act, but He had a lesson to teach us (as well as Abraham) in the trial of Abraham's faith. God wanted to express to us something of the great cost to Himself in the giving of His only begotten Son. God loved poor, guilty, ruined sinners, but His absolute holiness prevented Him from showing mercy until He had a way to do it righteously. This was accomplished when God sent His well-beloved, His only begotten Son into this world, and allowed wicked men to crucify Him; then on the cross in those three hours of darkness God poured out on His sinless head the judgment due to sins, so that He might be able to come out and save guilty sinners, and yet be righteous. Thus we see that Genesis 22 is more than history; it is an unfolding of the heart of God in a type. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

Then in chapter 24 we find Abraham thinking and acting to procure for that son of his love, the one who had been in the place of death on the altar, a wife, a companion suited to him. This is the longest chapter in Genesis, and one of the longest in the Old Testament; and it is all devoted to a man getting a wife. Now why should God enter into such details of this family scene? simply to tell us that He is interested in His Son having a bride. It reminds us of the parable in Matthew 22, where it says, "A certain king... made a marriage for his son." The chief and central object of the type in Genesis 24, and of the parable in Matthew 22, is to unfold God's purposes that the Son of His love should be honored and be happy in receiving His bride.

That beloved One had to go into death, the death of the cross, before He could have a bride. He was the "corn of wheat" that had to fall into the ground and die before He could bring forth "much

fruit," and see of the travail of His soul. After the work of redemption was accomplished through His death and blood-shedding, He ascended up on high and sat down on the right hand of God, and there He is at present. Then the Holy Spirit came down to seek a bride for Him, just as Abraham's servant, following his directions, went into another land to seek a bride for Isaac. Abraham's servant went about his mission with all diligence, and allowed nothing to hinder him from carrying out his instructions. He went to find the bride, and to woo and to win her heart to the one who had been in the place of death, and who had been given all the riches of Abraham. This faithful servant produced gifts which were evidences of the riches of Abraham and of Isaac, and gave them to Rebekah as the token and pledge of the love of one whom she had not yet seen.

After Rebekah heard of all the glories of Isaac, she was pointedly asked, "Wilt thou go with this man?" Her answer was a clear and precise affirmative, "I will go." She did not figure out what it would cost her to go, for her heart was won, and love does not calculate. Immediately she began the long journey through the desert to her beloved bridegroom, the servant conducting her all the way.

Today the Spirit of God is in this world seeking out a bride for Christ, the One who had to die to put her sins away so that He could have her. The Holy Spirit is here to tell of the death, resurrection, and glory of Christ, and to woo and win the hearts of sinners to Him who loved them. And may we ask this question of each one here today, Has your heart been won to the Lord Jesus? What is

He to you? Do you know Him as the One who loved you and died on the cross to save you? Has your heart responded to the loving query, "Wilt thou go with this man?" If you can say, "He died for me," you will also say, "I will go." You cannot know Him without loving Him, and you cannot love Him without a desire to be with Him.

It is strikingly significant that the first time we have Jove mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 22, where it is Abraham's love to Isaac; the second time is in Genesis 24, where it is Isaac's love to his bride - Rebekah. The former faintly pictures to our souls the love of God to His Son, even to Him whom He delivered up for us all; and the latter feebly tells of the great love of Christ to the Church, His bride. For while in the type Isaac was first on the altar in the place of death before he received his bride, it could not be said of him as of our blessed Lord, "Christ... loved the church and gave Himself for it." Eph. 5:25.

Now let us turn to the last book of the Bible, Revelation 21, where we see a beautiful future scene. The Church, those of this age who are saved and sheltered by the precious blood of Christ, is seen coming down out of heaven "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (v. 2). This brings before us what the Church is to be to Christ. She will be beautiful because He Himself has made her so, and all her beauty is to be for Him, and for Him alone. We always like to see a bride; a bride is beautiful, but here all her adornment is for her husband. It will be her delight to be fully and forever for Him. Fellow Christian, what a glorious time awaits us - to be adorned as He would have us, and all be for Himself. May our hearts leap with joy at the thought of being thus prepared for Him who loves us and gave Himself for us. There will not be a spot or blemish to mar that perfection which is for Him.

Then in the ninth verse of this same chapter we read another prophetic utterance: "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Here the emphasis is on the "Lamb's wife." This is a

glory that others may and will see, for she is here displayed "having the glory of God." We shall share in all His glory; and while our beauty will be for Himself, there will also be the public display that we are His.

Just as Rebekah was for Isaac alone, his bride, and the one necessary to his happiness, so we who are saved shall be for Christ, fully in keeping with all He is; and, what is more, we shall be necessary to Him also. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Isa. 53:11. Then as Rebekah was made one with Isaac and so possessed of all his great riches with him, so we shall be "the Lamb's wife," and share all His riches and glory. Rebekah had not been to the altar with Isaac; he was there alone (except for Abraham, who had the fire and the knife, the symbols of judgment), but she was brought to him later to satisfy his heart, and share all his possessions. So the Lord Jesus was there alone on the cross in those three awful hours of darkness, except that God was there in judgment on sin; but we are to be brought to Him as the fruit of His toil and sorrow, to satisfy His affections, and share His glory.

When Rebekah neared the end of her wilderness journey, she "lifted up her eyes" to look for Isaac; he was out watching and looking for her. Then she lighted off the camel - the ship of the desert, which was needed no more. Our wilderness journey is about over; may "we lift our wishful, longing eyes," waiting to see His blessed face.

The Tongue, the Lips, and the Mouth

The throat, the tongue, the lips, and the mouth are enumerated in Romans 3, in that black picture of man's sin and guilt, for they have been instruments of evil that comes from within-from a wicked heart.

"Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." vv. 13, 14.

Yes, their throat is an open sepulcher; that is, it is the outlet for a place where moral death reigns. Their tongues have been used to deceive-maybe in deliberate lying, or perhaps just using partial truths to deceive. The poison of asps is under their lips to infect those who hear their speech; and their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Such is man in his condition of distance from and enmity toward God-a black picture indeed.

In the 10th chapter of the same epistle, we find that when the gospel is received in faith, those same lips are used in another way: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus [or, Jesus as Lord], and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. 10:9, 10.

After one receives in the heart the truth that the Lord Jesus died for him, and rose again, then the mouth is opened in confession of that blessed Person as Lord. Yes, the same mouth that beforehand had been used to deceive, to curse, to poison, is now opened to confess as its own Lord the One who was formerly despised. Blessed change!

This is interestingly illustrated in the one thief who got saved while hanging on a cross beside the Lord Jesus. At first he joined his fellow thief in reviling the Lord of glory; but when the light dawned in his soul, he spoke out against such conduct, and mentioned the fear of God. He rebuked the other thief, witnessed to the Lord's innocence, and then turned to Jesus and addressed Him as Lord. What a change! and in such a short time. His lips, his tongue, and his mouth, which had been so recently used in the service of Satan, were now used to confess Jesus as Lord. It was so with Saul of Tarsus, the mad persecutor of all who honored the name of Jesus; for when he was brought face to face with the fact that it was the Lord Jesus he was persecuting, he used his lips to own Jesus as Lord. This same feature continued to mark the Apostle Paul, for when he neared the end of his journey he spoke affectionately of "Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8). Time had neither erased nor dimmed that which his tongue uttered on the Damascus road years before.

In Hebrews 13 we read, "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." v. 15.

What a wonderful thing it is that these lips of ours- once used for that which was evil-can now bring forth fruit to God! And how can they produce fruit? in "giving thanks to His name"! First, the heart must feel that thankfulness, and then the lips utter it to God; and He calls it "fruit." Blessed fruit! but

all the result of what His own grace has wrought for us, and in us.

There are many verses that speak of how the mouth may be used, but here is another we wish to notice: "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 15:6. The mouth which was once used in disrespect of God can now be used to glorify Him, and that together with the saints of God.

Then in Ephesians 4, where we get exhortations to walk according to the place wherein we now stand, we find these words:

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." v. 29.

Not only are our lips to confess Jesus as our Lord, to bring forth fruit for God, and to glorify Him, but by His grace they can be used for that which is good so as to edify other Christians. Who but God could take such lips and make them instruments of blessing?

But there is also a sad and solemn reflection for us who are saved, in that these lips may even yet bring forth that which is not good or for edification; so we are exhorted to let no corrupt communication come out of our mouths. How easily one may slip into that evil! The heart is still incurably wicked, and we possess an evil nature that may show itself; nowhere is it more apt to be seen than in what comes out of our mouths. Perhaps something defiling has been heard by us, and we have not had the cover on the vessel (Numb. 19:15), and it found an entrance into our minds; it was defiling, and the tendency is to repeat it to another. Sad, sad it is when we do this, for our mouth is then an instrument for defiling others, and not for edifying them.

The epistle of James speaks a great deal about the tongue and what it does; this epistle does not go deeper, to the source in the heart, but lets us know the terrible things that come out of the mouth. It says (read James 3) it "is a little member, and boasteth great things." Yes, the tongue is only a little member, but it can do untold damage. How it can boast! And boastfulness is hateful to God; it is pride. The tongue is one thing that no man has tamed, although he has tamed creatures of the land, sea, and air; it is an unruly evil. But the inspired penman goes on to say that out of the same mouth ought not to come forth good things and bad ones; a fountain does not send forth sweet water and bitter, or salt water and fresh. These words should exercise us greatly about what comes out of our mouths.

In Colossians 3 we are told to put away "filthy communication" out of our mouths, and not to lie one to another (vv. 8, 9). How easily we retell something and do not tell it exactly as it was told to us. We are very apt to color things, to put a different light on them, and is not this in its essence lying? How careful we ought to be to tell things correctly, and to judge every infraction of exact truthfulness.

When Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, he said that he feared that when he came to them he would find "debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults" (2 Cor. 12:20). How sad that such a condition could exist among the saints of God! What debates or contentions have been in the Church on earth! What confusion and evil work have been wrought by envying! And what shall we say of wraths and strifes, or animosities and dissensions? Do they not come from within, from an evil heart, from that which is left unjudged by

ourselves? But the backbitings, or as another translation puts it, "detractions," have brought sorrow to many hearts. How easily we go behind others' backs, and say things to detract from our brethren. Is not this a prevalent evil? Is it not still at work among the children of God? And oh, those whisperings, or gossiping! Who can estimate the trouble and grief in the assemblies of God's people brought on by whispering? Whispering, or gossiping, is never about good; it is always something shady. But some saints hide behind the fact that what they whisper is the truth; is it "lovely,... of good report," or is it praiseworthy? How much evil speaking and whispering would be avoided if we refused to say something behind our brother's back that we would not say to his face. And shall one point a finger at another? Is there one who is not in some measure guilty of this? But let us be on our guard, for the Word of God warns of these evils and their sad results.

Very much of the gossiping would be avoided if we showed the spirit of love; love will never harm the object of its affection. If love were more active we would be more in the spirit of prayer, seeking the good and blessing of our brother instead of speaking about him to others. Did the Lord speak to others about Peter's faults, or even his failure? but rather He said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee." How much more are we ready to speak to others of the faults of our brother than to bear him up before the throne of grace.

From these whisperings come roots of bitterness, and soon many are defiled. May the Lord exercise us all to be on our guard against the inroads of this pernicious evil, but rather show love that "covers a multitude of sins." May God see love in exercise on behalf of our brethren.

There are some wholesome words of wisdom in the book of Proverbs on this subject, which we will quote: "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin." And is not this true? Where there is much talk, there is sin in it. "But he that refraineth his lips is wise." Pro. 10:19.

"A whisperer separateth chief friends" (Pro. 16:28). An evil work indeed! But how many friends have been separated by the work of some whisperer - someone who may have told the truth, but colored it, or put a wrong light on it; and the injured one had no redress, for he was unaware of what was done.

"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles." Pro. 21:23. Wholesome words! Needed words!

And let us remember that when someone starts some slander, or evil report, "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." Pro. 26:20. Have we not had it in our power to let some evil report end with us, rather than to repeat it, and continue to spread it? Have we always been careful to not add wood to the fire?

One brother made it a habit to ask anyone who brought him a piece of gossip, "Can I tell it to the party you are speaking about? If not, don't tell me."

And does not a bad report travel faster than a good one? Yes, even a lie will run faster than the truth. Years ago, one said, "A lie will go around the world before the truth can get its boots on." And then when an evil report is started and later found to have been incorrect, or untrue, do the same ones that spread it make an equal effort to circulate the truth, and correct the wrong? In many instances, No.

In closing there are two verses in the Psalms that we might well use as a prayer each day. Not that we approve of forms of prayer, but these verses express most suitably what should be the real desire of our hearts:

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer." Psalm 19:14. How careful we should be that the words of our mouths may be acceptable in His sight. Our brother may not hear what is said about him, but there is One who hears and knows all, and we should seek that all that is in the heart, and what comes out of the mouth, may meet with His approval.

And the last verse we will quote is, "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." Psalm 141:3. If this were the desire of our hearts and the language of our lips, when we meet with other Christians, how different would be our subject of conversation. May the Lord grant us grace to desire this keeping of our mouth and lips. And may the tongue, lips, and mouth, formerly used in our sin

and folly, be used to glorify God and minister grace to others.

The True Grace of God Wherein Ye Stand

1 Peter 5:12

God is known to us as the "God of all grace," and the position in which we are set is that of tasting "that the Lord is gracious." How hard it is for us to believe this, that the Lord is gracious. The natural feeling of our hearts is, I know that "Thou art an austere man"; there is the want in all of us naturally of the understanding of the grace of God.

There is sometimes the thought that grace implies God's passing over sin; but no, grace supposes sin to be so horribly bad a thing that God cannot tolerate it; were it in the power of man, after being unrighteous and evil, to patch up his ways and mend himself so as to stand before God, there would be no need of grace. The very fact of the Lord's being gracious shows sin to be so evil a thing that, man being a sinner, his state is utterly ruined and hopeless; and nothing but free grace will do for him - can meet his need.

We must learn what God is to us, not by our own thoughts, but by what He has revealed Himself to be, and that is, "the God of all grace." The moment I understand that I am a sinful man, and yet that it was because the Lord knew the full extent of my sin, and what its hatefulness was, that He came to me, I understand what grace is. Faith makes me see that God is greater than my sin, and not that my sin is greater than God. The Lord that I have known as laying down His life for me, is the same Lord I have to do with every day of my life; and all His dealings with me are on the same principles of grace. The great secret of growth is, the looking up to the Lord as gracious. How precious, how strengthening it is to know that Jesus is at this moment feeling and exercising the same love toward me as when He died on the cross for me.

This is a truth that should be used by us in the most common everyday circumstances of life. Suppose, for instance, I find an evil temper in myself, which I feel it difficult to overcome; let me bring it to Jesus as my Friend, and virtue goes out of Him for my need. Faith should be ever thus in exercise against temptations, and not simply my own effort; my own effort against it will never be sufficient. The source of real strength is in the sense of the Lord's being gracious. The natural man in us always disbelieves Christ as the only source of strength and of every blessing. Suppose my soul is out of communion, the natural heart says, "I must correct the cause of this before I can come to Christ." But He is gracious, and knowing this, the way is to return to Him at once, just as we are, and then humble ourselves deeply before Him. It is only in Him and from Him that we shall find that which will restore our souls. Humbleness in His presence is the only real humbleness. If we own ourselves in His presence to be just what we are, we shall find that He will show us nothing but grace.

It is Jesus who gives abiding rest to our souls, and not what our thoughts about ourselves may be. Faith never thinks about that which is in ourselves as its ground of rest; it receives, loves, and apprehends what God has revealed, and what are God's thoughts about Jesus, in whom is His rest. As knowing Jesus to be precious to our souls, our eyes and our hearts being occupied with

Him, they will be effectually prevented from being taken up with the vanity and sin around; and this too will be our strength against the sin and corruption of our own hearts. Whatever I see in myself that is not in Him is sin; but then it is not thinking of my own sins, and my own vileness, and being occupied with them, that will humble me, but thinking of the Lord Jesus, dwelling upon the excellency in Him. It is well to be done with ourselves, and to be taken up with Jesus. We are entitled to forget ourselves; we are entitled to forget our sins; we are entitled to forget all but Jesus.

There is nothing so hard for our hearts as to abide in the sense of grace, to continue practically conscious that we are not under law but under grace; it is by grace that the heart is "established," but then there is nothing more difficult for us really to comprehend than the fullness of grace, that "grace of God wherein ye stand," and to walk in the power and consciousness of it.... It is only in the presence of God that we can know it, and there it is our privilege to be. The moment we get away from the presence of God, there will always be certain workings of our own thoughts within us, and our own thoughts can never reach up to the thoughts of God about us, to the "grace of God."

Anything that I had the smallest possible right to expect could not be pure, free grace, could not be "the grace of God."... It is alone when in communion with Him that we are able to measure everything according to His grace.... It is impossible, when we are abiding in the sense of God's presence for anything, be what it may - even the state of the Church - to shake us, for we count on God, and then all things become a sphere and scene for the operation of His grace.

The having very simple thoughts of grace is the true source of our strength as Christians; and the abiding in the sense of grace, in the presence of God, is the secret of all holiness, peace, and quietness of spirit.

The "grace of God" is so unlimited, so full, so perfect, that if we get for a moment out of the presence of God, we cannot have the true consciousness of it; we have no strength to apprehend it; and if we attempt to know it out of His presence, we shall only turn it to licentiousness. If we look at the simple fact of what grace is, it has no limits, no bounds. Be we what we may, in spite of all that, what God is toward us is LOVE. Neither our joy nor our peace is dependent on what we are to God, but on what He is to us, and this is grace.

Grace supposes that all the sin and evil that is in us, and is the blessed revelation that, through Jesus, all this sin and evil has been put away. A single sin is more horrible to God than a thousand sins - than all the sins in the world are to us. And yet, with the fullest consciousness of what we are, all that God is pleased to be toward us is LOVE.

In Romans 7 the state described is that of a person quickened, but whose whole set of reasonings center in himself.... He stops short of grace, of the simple fact that, whatever be his state, let him be as bad as he may, GOD IS LOVE, and only love toward him. Instead of looking at God, it is all "I," "I," "I." Faith looks at God, as He has revealed Himself in grace.... Let me ask you Am I, or is my state, the object of faith? No, faith never makes what is in my heart its object, but God's revelation of Himself in grace.

Grace has reference to what GOD is, and not to what we are, except indeed that the very greatness of our sins does but magnify the extent of the "grace of God." At the same time, we must remember that the object and necessary effect of grace is to bring our souls into communion

with God-to sanctify us by bringing the soul to know God and to love Him; therefore the knowledge of grace is the true source of sanctification.

The triumph of grace is seen in this, that when man's enmity had cast out Jesus from the earth, God's love had brought in salvation by that very act - came in to atone for the sin of those who had rejected Him. In the view of the fullest development of man's sin, faith sees the fullest development of God's grace. I have got away from grace if I have the slightest doubt or hesitation about God's love. I shall then be saying, I am unhappy because I am not what I should like to be. That is not the question. The real question is, whether God is what we should like Him to be, whether Jesus is all we could wish. If the consciousness of what we are - of what we find in ourselves - has any other effect than, while it humbles us, to increase our adoration of what God is, we are off the ground of pure grace. Is there distress and distrust in your minds? See if it be not because you are still saying, "I," "I," and losing sight of God's grace.

It is better to be thinking of what God is than of what we are. This looking at ourselves, at the bottom is really pride, a want of the thorough consciousness that we are good for nothing. Till we see this, we never look quite away from self to God. In looking to Christ, it is our privilege to forget ourselves. True humility does not so much consist in thinking badly of ourselves, as in not thinking of ourselves at all.

I am too bad to be worth thinking about. What I want is, to forget myself and to look to God, who is indeed worth all my thoughts. Is there need of being humbled about ourselves? We may be quite sure that will do it.

Beloved, if we can say as in Romans 7, "In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing," we have thought quite long enough about ourselves; let us then think about Him who thought about us with thoughts of good and not of evil, long before we had thought of ourselves at all. Let us see what His thoughts of grace about us are, and take up the words of faith, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

True Riches

A very wealthy man took a friend up to the top of his house to show him the extent of his possessions.

Waving his hand about, he said, "There, that is my estate." Then, pointing away, he asked, "Do you see that farm in the distance?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is mine."

Pointing in another direction, he said, "Do you see that house?"

"Yes."

"That also belongs to me."

This time his friend pointed and asked, "Do you see that village away out there?"

"Yes."

"Well, there lives a poor woman in that village who can say more than all you have said."

"What can she say?"

"She can say, 'Christ is mine.' "

The rich man looked very puzzled, and said no more. He was glorying in his earthly riches, but was not rich toward God. He was not one of those spoken of in Jas. 2:5 who are rich in faith. On the contrary, the poor woman had none of this world's riches, but had "unsearchable riches" in Christ. His riches might take wings and fly away, but her riches in Christ are everlasting, and no thief can steal them.

"Thus saith the LORD,... let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD." Jer. 9:23, 24.

The Two Covenants

A covenant is a principle of relationship with God on the earth-conditions established by God under which man is to live with Him. The word may, perhaps, be used figuratively or by accommodation. It is applied to details of the relationship of God with Israel; but strictly speaking, there are but two covenants, the old and the new. The old was established at Sinai. The new covenant is made also with the two houses of Israel.

The gospel is not a covenant, but the revelation of the salvation of God. It proclaims the great salvation. We enjoy all the essential privileges of the new covenant, its foundation being of God; but we do so in spirit, not according to the letter. The new covenant will be established formally with Israel in the Millennium.

Unmistakable Answer to Prayer

"I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of Him." 1 Sam. 1:27.

There is nothing more refreshing to a child of faith than to receive a definite and unmistakable answer to prayer. The world knows little about this. But he who has to do with God in secret has proved by his experience that He is a hearer of prayer. What victories have been won, and what promises have been obtained in the closet! Though the outside world sees nothing of these wrestlings with God in the secret place, yet faith is daily proving that the Lord is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Until the Day Break

I wonder if anyone ever saw anything much more lovely than a beautiful sunset or sunrise?

I remember one time the fence had been left down in our pasture, and the horses got out.

We had been told late at night that they had been seen some miles distant from our house. So early the next morning, before sunrise, we started out in the car to find them.

I was keeping a lookout to see the sun rise, and as we went along I kept glancing back toward the northeast. In that part of the sky there were dark clouds, and as I watched for these to go I could not help thinking of that verse,

"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away" (S. of Sol. 2:17).

But what happens as they gradually do break? As we came out on the hilltop where the horses were, the sky was tinted with lovely colors. As time went on they became brighter and more lovely. The sky was shot with gold and red.

When we turned in at our road, coming home, and came up the hill, what a golden scene met our gaze there!

What was the cause of this great transformation of the dull sky? The sun-the sun coming forth in all his glory and majesty.

How much more beautiful will it be when "the Sun of righteousness" shall "arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4:2).

Even before the glorious change had really taken place, the birds were awake awaiting the coming of day.

Oh, may we too be found watching for that day when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 Thess. 4:16).

May our hearts be filled with joy and peace, as we see this time approaching.

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. 13:12).

Lessons in Victory

Josh. 8:1-28

So long as Israel's sin remained unconfessed (see chap. 7), it remained unforgiven; and consequently they had no strength to war for Jehovah. He was not with them, for the sin in their camp had separated between them and their God (Isa. 59:2); but having now confessed and forsaken their sin, God had put it away. Some of God's people spend months- nay, years-of their lifetime in a condition of spiritual inaction, their hearts like water, and themselves afar from the knowledge of God's mind! Let there be but a hair's breadth severing the telephone line, and we cannot converse with our friends. Thus does sin separate between God and His people. Not indeed that God foregoes His grace toward His own, or fails to bring them safely home; but here on earth, during this lifetime, unconfessed sin breaks into the communication of God's mind to us, and to it is due the absence of divine power in us, and hence ineffective soldier-ship.

So long as communion with God is broken, courage for Him is lacking. Spiritual courage is the consequence of faith in God, and active faith follows communion with Him. Abraham walked with God, and God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Upon the mind of God being communicated to the servant, the servant acts in faith, and gains the victory. Unfaithful hearts, proud self-reliant spirits, occasion defeat in the Lord's work. Jehovah's word, "Neither will I be with you any more," is a solemn sentence for the Christian soldier, and until the evil God exposes be cast out from the midst of His people, defeat follows their steps. The really effective soldier of Christ is not only a constant and energetic worker for God, he is also a truly humble and dependent man walking with God. Unless the Christian be in a right state before God, the Spirit is grieved, and His fire in the soul is quenched. True power in the believer is not his own might, but God's strength in him; he is but a vessel filled by the Lord.

Men once used for God are at times set aside by God; they go on as of old in their work, but win no victories; they essay, like Samson, to shake themselves, but the Philistines obtain the mastery. The story of Ai unveils the cause - hidden evil is in the camp. Again these selfsame servants arise, and, after a period of defeat, become once more vessels of power with God and with men. The story of Ai again lets us into the secret: they have been before God, and have humbled themselves. As He has discovered to them the cause of their failure, so they have judged themselves in His sight, casting out the evil thing from among them; and once more God gives them courage to go forward, granting victory to their efforts.

Having turned from the fierceness of His anger against His people Israel, the Lord encouraged Joshua to go forward, saying, "Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai." Reassuring indeed were God's words; recalling His first gracious exhortation and encouragement, victory was ensured. But how differently was the battle to be fought from the way in which Israel had at first proposed to overthrow the heap of ruins, Ai. They had said, "Make not all the people to labor thither"; the Lord said, "Take all the people of war"; and as the thousands of Israel arose to battle, each soldier had to remember that small foes cannot be

made light of, for of Jehovah alone was Israel's strength and courage.

"Labor thither" all Israel did - some to the ambush, others to the front - for when we lightly make errors, and sin willfully in our service, God enforces upon us by toil and labor those lessons we neglected, even though He has shown us our errors and pardoned our ways. And not only did Israel labor up to Ai, but God made them victorious through humiliation; by apparent defeat, by fleeing before their foes, they won their success. Falls and failures teach the believer to walk with diffidence. He who is not of a chastened spirit after a fall or a failure, has not thoroughly repented of the iniquity of his sin; neither is God truly with the man who is not of a chastened spirit, "for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

Hidden work, that which goes on in the heart with God, the world sees not. God's ways with His people baffle all human calculations. The foe reckons merely on human might; of the secret things which render God's hand against His saints in their path of service and warfare, the world concerns itself not. We see this principle in the way the king of Ai came out against Israel. He saw no change in them. To his eye, they were the selfsame people who had fled before him a day or two previously; therefore he imagined they would fall into his hands as easily as before. He wist not that the Lord was among them. On he came, but only to meet his doom and to complete the destruction of his city. Joshua's outstretched javelin was the signal to Israel, and the sign of a war which cannot cease till every foe is cast down and destroyed.

Little did the heathen king dream what was the result of God's secret work in the camp, accomplished through His dealings with them in government and in rebuke. Israel was a different people from what they had been a few days previously; their hands were clean and their hearts were strong. What the spirit of pride designates as the folly of fasting and prayer, had been favorable in the eye of the Holy One, though to human gaze it had been but degradation of self. Spiritual movements are incomprehensible to the world- all that it recognizes is the result of the movement. May God's hidden works in the hearts of His people deepen and increase; may His soldiers be alone with Him in the camp, and, judging themselves and purifying themselves from iniquity, find God among them, and at His bidding come forth to victory, their eyes upon the outstretched spear of their Leader.

Waiting

Psalm 40:1

It is Christ's perfect life, and sorrows at the close of it, in which He refers to the faithfulness and goodness of Jehovah, so as to lead His people to confide in it, instructing them in this in which His perfection is shown. "I waited patiently for Jehovah" (J.N.D. Trans.). Patience had its perfect work-an immense lesson for us. Flesh can wait long, but not till the Lord comes in-not in perfect submission- and confiding only in His strength and faithfulness, so as to be perfect in obedience and in the will of God.

Saul waited nearly seven days, but the confidence of the flesh was melting away-his army. The Philistines, the proud enemies, were there. He did not wait till the Lord came in with Samuel. Had he obeyed, and felt he could do nothing, and had only to obey and wait, he would have said, "I can do nothing, and I ought to do nothing, till the Lord comes with Samuel." Flesh trusted in its own wisdom, and looked to its own force, though with pious forms. All was lost. It was flesh which was tried and failed. Christ was tried. He waited patiently for Jehovah. He was perfect and complete in all the will of God. And this is our path through grace.

What Is Needed Today

We are most thoroughly persuaded that what is needed for the day in which our lot is cast is wholehearted, out-and-out, undivided consecration of heart to Christ-a thorough breaking with the world in its every phase-that perfect rest and satisfaction of heart in God Himself which renders a man wholly independent of all that this wretched world has to offer. If there be not this, we need not look for any real progress in the divine life.

Wisdom: Where Is It to Be Found?

"Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither, is it found in the land of the living.... Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living.... Behold, the fear of the Lord, THAT is wisdom." Job 28:13, 21, 28. The fear of the Lord is the setting aside of our own will, so that the will of God as expressed in the Word directs our paths.

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching [the actual thing preached- J.N.D. Trans.] to save them that believe." 1 Cor. 1:21.

Wisdom was before creation (Prov. 8). Creation displayed it (Psalm 104:24). Wisdom entered this world in the Person of Christ, but man by his wisdom knew Him not (Acts 13:27). The world in its "wisdom" rejected Him. His death is the complete setting aside of the first man (2 Cor. 5:14-18), for in new creation "all things are of God." The pathway of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ on earth is the path of wisdom in a world where fallen man, by his lust and his "wisdom," corrupts himself, and rejects God, revealed in Christ. The natural man is the slave of his lusts (John 8:34), and his mind is at enmity against God (Rom. 8:7).

Christ, the perfect obedient Man, lived "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). He left His own an example that we should "follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). The sermon on the mount (Matt. 5-7) is the wisdom of God in a world of evil. The new nature in the child of God will manifest these moral excellencies, in the measure in which the old nature is kept in the place of death (2 Cor. 4:10).

God's wisdom is perfect, because of His perfect knowledge of all things. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor?" Rom. 11:33, 34. Man can never discover the things that belong to revelation. This is just the theme in the Book of Ecclesiastes. It shows us the extent of man's wisdom "under the sun" apart from God's revelation. Creation and resurrection are two things that belong to revelation. The wisdom of man could never discover either the one or the other, as we see from Acts 17:23-32.

Man is a fallen creature, and his fallen nature loves sin. He is at enmity with God and does not want God's wisdom. To him "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." Pro. 9:17. But this same Book of Proverbs shows us that "the way of transgressors is hard [not pleasant]" (Pro. 13:15). This is because Proverbs shows the way of wisdom in an evil world. We need a path wherein to walk, and this God has given us in the Book of Proverbs. It is heavenly wisdom in which man is called to walk, instead of yielding to the evil of a fallen nature. These moral principles are of immense value for young and old in the pathway of life.

Now Christianity supplies that which is needed to walk rightly in these ways, by giving the believer a new life, a new power, and an Object for the affections of his heart. Christ is now our life (Col. 3:4), the Holy Spirit that dwells within us is the power for godliness (Rom. 8:4), while Christ in glory

is the end of the path for faith (Phil. 3:14). The child of God does not need to know the subtle evil of the world to avoid it. He needs "a plain path" (Psalm 27:11). This the Book of Proverbs supplies, by giving us the wisdom of God for our walk. He who knows all, and has understanding of all, has given us in this Book the way of wisdom in all the various relationships of life, the temptations, and the vexations that are met along the pathway of life. How precious to have the wisdom of God to direct us!

"The wisdom that is from above is first pure [no element of self in it], then peaceable [it takes the heart out of all that produces the strife in this world], gentle [just yielding, because the will of fallen nature is not there], and easy to be intreated [it commends itself by its fruit], full of mercy [it is not the fruit of what man is, for the source of wisdom's actions is the new life] and good fruits [God in His nature is displayed, so that fruit is there], without partiality [it does not question whether it is deserved or not], and without hypocrisy [it is unfeigned, because it is pure]." Jas. 3:17.

Now the wisdom of God is not an extension of man's wisdom, neither is it an improvement upon it. It is always the very opposite of man's wisdom. Apart from the revelation of truth found in the Word of God, man makes the horizon of all his thoughts, his efforts, and his actions, the world in which he lives. His whole life is governed by these worldly motives. Now the voice of wisdom, as found in the Word, would teach us to sit at the feet of Jesus, as Mary did, and listen to the word of His mouth, that we might learn God's wisdom. This is the meaning of 1 Cor. 3:18: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool [that is, take the place of knowing nothing], that he may be wise." How blessed is this principle! I do not need to know the evil of the world to be kept from it, but just walk in the light and wisdom of the Word. Only in this way is the eye kept single, not governed by the self-pleasing of a fallen nature, but by the precious wisdom of the Word. Speaking of this path, the Word tells us, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Pro. 3:17.

A few examples will show how God's wisdom is the opposite of man's. The world by its wisdom would say, "Unity is strength." The language of Scripture is, "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces:... gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.... Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us." Isa. 8:9, 10. This passage, of course, is prophetic; but it is the word of wisdom to the feeble godly remnant of a coming day, warning them not to be entangled with the confederacy of the nations that will seek strength in a unity which, though it will appear strong in the eyes of man, will in the end be "broken in pieces." We can see how the godly ones of that day will take the opposite path to that of man's wisdom; and then God will, in His wisdom, grace, and power, deliver them, just as He delivered Israel of old when He led them out of Egypt and destroyed the mighty power of Pharaoh. Now the word to our hearts in this day is, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). Confiding in God, victory is sure, when in the path of His will. Our kingdom is not of this world. Here we may suffer, but nothing can really be lost when walking in wisdom's ways. The end will ever prove that "Wisdom is justified of all her children." Luke 7:35.

Again, man's wisdom would tell us that we must know something of the evil of the world in order to avoid it. God says, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Rom. 16:19). How precious the principle! God, who has understanding of all, would preserve the

child of God from every subtlety of the enemy. We have but to hearken to the voice of wisdom in the Word. It is just this forming of the habit of not doing our own will, but waiting upon God who speaks with wisdom in the Word, that delivers us from every false path.

Again, the world would tell us that we must have ambition to succeed. Now the wisdom of the Word would teach us contentment. Heb. 13:5 says, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." How far above man's wisdom is the wisdom of God!

Let the reader meditate on Psalm 49. Here we find that what man calls wisdom, God calls folly; and yet we read that "their posterity approve their sayings" (v. 13). The child of God is to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). He is to live in view of the judgment seat of Christ when all will be made manifest. Then those who have walked in wisdom's ways will be commended of Him.

Natural relationships form beautiful pictures of the wisdom of the ways of God. The parent has authority given of God (Eph. 6:1), but it is authority to be used in loving wisdom to do the child good all the days of his life. Love is here the motive spring of authority rightly used. Now it is the love of God that moved His heart to give us this wisdom from Himself, to guide our feet through a world filled with evil, and with the subtlety of an enemy who would use the fallen nature within us to lead in the paths of sin and folly.

The relationship of husband and wife too is a picture of Christ and the Church. If every husband would remember that his relationship is to be patterned in the manner of Christ's love to the Church; and if every wife would remember her place of submission is to be as the Church is to Christ, what a blessing it would be!

No relationship in life can be ordered aright without this wisdom from God. Alas, many a dear child of God has neglected it in his home life, even though he may have, at the same time, shown diligence in other ways of service to the Lord. May our home life be patterned according to this wisdom, and our children be brought up in it too! This is what is taught in Ephesians, chapters 5 and 6. Let us teach our children that the motive of all right conduct is love, keeping the commandments of God. Christian commandments are moral, and spring from the new nature given to us by God, as His children. Our whole Christian life is to be characterized by pleasing God-not pleasing self.

Let those who attend school and college ever remember that the things that belong to revelation are beyond reason. Reason must begin with facts. It can never give you the facts. Nothing that is known as a fact is the fruit of reason. It is always the fruit of testimony or experience. There are things in the Word of God beyond reason, and indeed it must be so because they come from God. A God whom man's reason is equal to, is not God at all. A man must be master of a subject to know it rightly, and he cannot be this of God. God and His wisdom is utterly beyond man.

When we come to something we cannot understand, we should just say with David in Psalm 139:6, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I CANNOT ATTAIN UNTO IT." Let us ever come to the Word of God as newborn babes, and allow our thoughts to be formed by the precious wisdom of God. "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD, doth man live." Deut. 8:3.

"Low at Thy feet, Lord Jesus,
This is the place for me;
Here I have learned deep lessons-
Truth that has set me free.
"Free from myself, Lord Jesus,
Free from the ways of men;
Chains of thought that have bound me,
Never can bind again.
None but Thyself, Lord Jesus,
Conquered this wayward will;
But for Thy love constraining,
I had been wayward still."

Without Excuse

Do you know what the Scripture says about Jesus Christ, you, and eternity?

Jesus told the "religious" of His day, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures" (Matt. 22:29).

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the Scriptures- the prophets-spoke of His coming. The world should have known and welcomed Him, but their ignorance and blindness concerning the teaching of Scripture led them to fail to recognize who He was. The world is and was without excuse. Look what the Scripture revealed about Christ long before He came:

He would be of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:9, 10). He would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2).

He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14).

He would be called out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1).

He would come as a prophet (Deut. 18:18, 19). His own people would reject Him (Isa. 53:3). He would make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zech. 9:9).

He would be sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12, 13).

He would be put to death by crucifixion (Psalm 22).

His hands and His feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:16). Soldiers would cast lots for His clothing (Psalm 22:18). He would be raised from the dead (Psalm 16:9, 10).

He would ascend into heaven (Psalm 68:18).

Wit's End Corner

Are you in any difficulty? Is there any pressure upon you? Are you anticipating with nervous apprehension some formidable evil? Is your heart trembling at the very thought of it? It may be that you are like one who has come to the far end, like the Apostle Paul in Asia, "Pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." If so, beloved friend, accept a word of encouragement. It is our deep and earnest desire to strengthen your hands in God, and to encourage your heart to trust Him for all that is before you. "Fear not"; only believe. He never fails a trusting heart- no, never. Make use of the resources which are treasured up for you in Him. Just put yourself, your surroundings, your fears, your anxieties, all into His hands, and leave them there.

Yes; leave them there. It is of little use your putting your difficulties, your necessities, into His hands, and then, almost immediately, taking them into your own. We often do this. When in pressure, in need, in deep trial of some kind or other, we go to God in prayer; we cast our burden upon Him, and seem to get relief. But alas! no sooner have we risen from our knees, than we begin again to look at the difficulty, ponder the trial, dwell upon all the sorrowful circumstances, until we are again at our very wits' end.

Now this will never do. It sadly dishonors God, and, of course, leaves us unrelieved and unhappy. He would have our minds as free from care as the conscience is free from guilt. His word to us is, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." And what then? "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep [or garrison] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Thus it was that Moses, that beloved man of God and honored servant of Christ, sought to encourage his fellow laborer and successor, Joshua, in reference to all that was before him. "Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God He shall fight for you." Deut. 3:22. Thus too did the blessed

Apostle Paul encourage his beloved son and fellow servant Timothy to trust in the living God; to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; to lean with unshaken confidence on God's sure foundation; to commit himself with unquestioning assurance to the authority, teaching, and guidance of the Holy Scriptures; and thus armed and furnished, to give himself with holy diligence and true spiritual courage to that work to which he was called. And thus too, the writer and the reader can encourage one another, in these days of increasing difficulty, to cling in simple faith to that Word which is settled forever in heaven- to have it hidden in the heart as a living power and authority in the soul, something which will sustain us, though heart and flesh shall fail, and though we had not the countenance or support of a human being. "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: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." 1 Pet. 1:24, 25.

How precious is this! What comfort and consolation! What stability and rest! What real strength, victory, and moral elevation! It is not within the compass of human language to set forth the preciousness of the Word of God, or to define in adequate terms the comfort of knowing that the selfsame Word is settled forever in heaven, and which shall endure throughout the countless ages of eternity, is that which has reached our hearts in the glad tidings of the gospel, imparting to us eternal life, and giving us peace and rest in the finished work of Christ, and a perfectly satisfying Object in His adorable Person. Truly, as we think of all this, we cannot but own that every breath should be a hallelujah. Thus it shall be by-and-by, and that forever, all homage to His peerless name!

Word of Jehovah Established in Canaan

Josh. 8:30-35

"Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." 1 John 2:5.

Jericho and Ai each represent the world-their conquest by Joshua, Christ's victory and kingdom-and the overthrow of their kings, the final overthrow of the power of Satan. Our Joshua's victory is complete, and soon the time shall come when the "sun" of this day of rebellion against the Lord shall go "down" (chap. 8:29), and the end of the god of this world shall come. Then the risen, but once crucified, Jesus shall cast down the ruler of the darkness of this world from his seat, subject all foes, and bring all under His reign of righteousness. On this being accomplished, the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters the sea, and His word shall be established where it was despised.

After the recording of the end of the king of Ai, the grand event of the land being placed under the law of the Lord is brought forward. "Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lifted up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel." Chap. 8:30-32. The significance of this action, as a sequence to the overthrow of Jericho, Ai, and their kings, is very marked. The judgment and the overthrow of the heathen powers, introduced God's worship and His rule.

All Israel-armed men, women, and children-gathered together and publicly recognized Jehovah as the Lord God of Israel, exalted His laws, and sanctified His name in the midst of the hostile country. The hand of the Lord was with them, even as it had been on leaving Egypt, when not so much as a dog moved his tongue against them, and as it had been in Gilgal on their circumcision, when the terror of God was upon their foes. They now built the altar and inscribed the law upon the stones in obedience to the Lord, who had said, "On the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster: and thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law.... And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt offer burnt offerings... and peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God." Deut. 27:2-7.

This immense gathering together of the nation of Israel is a most impressive event in their history. The whole of the people, brought into God's holy habitation, with one voice, calmly and solemnly gave their amens to His commandments.

The steep mountain sides of Ebal and Gerizim were held by the twelve tribes, six on each mount; and the narrow plain between was, we should suppose, occupied by the Levites, who spoke and said with a loud voice unto all the people both the curses and the blessings of God (Deut. 27:11-14). Infants as well as warriors were present, "the stranger, as he that was born among

them"; none were left out. And in the clear atmosphere of Canaan the words of the law would be easily heard, rising from the valley up the slopes of the mountains.

So "all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges" stood around the ark of God, and placed themselves under the commandments of the Lord, while Joshua read "all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law." They hallowed His name in the land where the enemy and the idols still were. As a nation they avowed by their amens to the commandments of God and His law-by their "So be it!" to its curses and its blessings-that their prosperity, or discomfiture, in the promised land, depended upon their obedience or disobedience to God. It may be truthfully said, Israel's history, including their present condition, is but a comment upon their amens uttered at Ebal.

The Christian is not under a covenant of law; he does not stand in his blessings save in Christ; but it is not to be forgotten that the very portions of the Word which unfold the deepest grace are filled with exhortations as to his walk and ways.

A child is under even greater responsibility to obey than is a servant; and the Lord by whom we stand, says to us, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Love calls for obedience on its own condition-love!-while law calls for obedience on the condition of reward. But the voice of love is more powerful than that of law. Further, the Christian's successful career on earth is dependent on his obedience to the Word of his God; and though it cannot be said we resemble Israel as to the covenant under which they stood in Canaan, it is but the truth that the spiritual history of each Christian is but a comment on his obedience or disobedience to God's Word. The springs of our prosperity or discomfiture lie in adherence to, or in disregard of, our God's "It is written."

The emphatic ails connected with the Scriptures, and recorded by the Holy Spirit in the scene now before us, should be observed. All Israel heard, "read all the words of the law,... according to all that is written." There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel. May every heart be stirred up to follow "all" the truth of the Scriptures.

"It is written" was emblazoned upon the standard of victory raised by Israel in the center of the land of Canaan. The words of the Lord were plainly inscribed upon the stones for all eyes to behold, and the written word was loudly read for all ears to hear, and it was assented to by the nation.

Upon Ebal the altar was reared. It was erected to Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel. He was recognized as the Lord God of the nation, and Israel owned thereby their relationship with Him. Around this altar the entire nation assembled; and Christ is the altar and the center of the circle of God's people, around whom the saints gather. "An altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lifted up any iron" was set up, that that sacred altar might not have upon it the touch of man's tool, for to shape its stones with human hand was to "pollute" it; for Christ is the altar, and He is perfect; and the working of man's hands, man's thoughts respecting Him, do but produce infidelity and dishonor to His name.

The offering upon the altar was first that of sweet savor. "They offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD." Now, our first thoughts of the sacrifice of Jesus are such as pertain to the sense of our need of Him; but God's first thoughts relate to the perfection of the Lord's work, and to what He is to God and the Father, and this is wholly a sweet savor to Him. Israel had come into Jehovah's presence to worship Him; and the first voice, as it were, that arose in Canaan from the altar of the

Lord God of Israel, spoke of the sweetness of the sacrifice, all of which was burned upon the altar, and the savor arose to heaven.

Next, they "sacrificed peace offerings." The burnt offerings were wholly consumed, an atonement they were for man; but they were wholly burnt unto God-the priest shall burn all on the altar. But the peace offerings were eaten in part by the offerer, for in them the offerer had communion with God; in them man had his portion to feed upon; he ate of the victim which had been sacrificed. And according to what the soul really feeds upon of Christ by the Spirit, there is communion with God. Then do God's people "rejoice before the Lord" their God. Delight in Christ on the part of the saints is the next great fact presented by this great gathering together of Israel, and by their offerings.

"The stones" were erected "in mount Ebal" by the commandment of Moses, and were inscribed "very plainly" (Dent. 27:4-8) with the words of the law. Ebal being the mount whereon the six tribes were stationed who gave the amens to the curses attached to disobedience of God's word, "the stones" were placed upon the basis of the mountain of man's "So be it" to the loss of his favors should he disobey God's laws! The words of the law, thus written, would remain visible to all eyes for a long period of time, and probably did so remain, longer than Israel abode in obedience.

Joshua declared all the words of Jehovah their God to the people; not the blessings only, as we at times select our favorite portions, but all the words of the Lord. Their whole prosperity in Canaan hung upon their adherence to these words; the one condition on which the enjoyment of the land of promise, with its milk and honey, should continue to be theirs, was obedience. (Deut. 27:3.) This never should be forgotten, for what we sow, we reap.

The curses were read with a loud voice by the Levites; and, as each curse for disobedience sounded in Israel's ears, the hundreds of thousands assembled upon mount Ebal responded with unanimous amens. Twelve times they said "Amen" to the twelve-times-uttered curses, and the twelfth- "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them"-included every possible neglect or failure of which they could be capable. Blessings also were read (Josh. 8:33, 34); but concerning the amens sounding from mount Gerizim, Scripture is silent. It records not one responsive "So be it" to blessings earned by the obedience of fallen man (Deut. 27). Man may justly assent to all "the judgments" (Exod. 24:3) of God's law, but they who remain under the law must remain under its curse (Gal. 3:10).

Christians are not under a covenant whereby blessings are theirs according to their obedience, for we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places IN Christ; and these blessings are ours, not according to our behavior, but according as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has chosen us IN Him. Unbounded grace secures us our privileges, and unbounded grace has placed us IN Christ, IN whom our privileges are secured. If we build our altar of worship, it is because "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." Gal. 3:13, 14. Ours are blessings all of grace, not of works. "We are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Rom. 7:6.

The foothold of the Christian presents a striking contrast to that of Israel in this scene. Christ has by His death made His people free, for they have died to the law in Him; and His cross has

severed them from the law's power and dominion, for it addresses not its demands to men who are dead-

"My brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ" (Rom. 7:4). Can we doubt that the altar was erected on Ebal, the mount wherefrom the amens to the curses proceeded, to teach that Christ has redeemed us by His sacrifice from the curse of the law?

The covenant inscribed upon the plaster-covered stones, the Apostle Paul said, eighteen hundred years ago, "decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13); but the covenant of grace is changeless and eternal. "If that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." Heb. 8:7. That of grace is perfect before God, for the Lord Jesus Christ is the mediator thereof. His own precious blood has confirmed it, and our blessings are not entrusted to our own custody, for they are in the safe and eternal keeping of God our Father Himself. They are not written on stones, to remind us that our amen follows the divine and faithful Yea, but are written in the Scriptures, which teach us that all are both yea and amen for us in Christ.

Yet, while our spiritual privileges are indeed, through infinite grace, secured forever to us in Christ, in whom we are, let us never make light of responsibility. The greater our blessing, the greater our responsibility; the injunctions under grace are incomparably more urgent for holiness than are the commands of the law. And the call to follow the Lord from Himself in heaven is a more separating one from the world than was that which thundered forth from Sinai. We may read over and over again Moses' words to Israel, and take their spirit to ourselves, even while rejoicing that we stand not upon such terms as did Israel. And are there not witnesses around us, who proclaim the bitterness of departing from the living God? Are not many of God's people at this day in captivity? May it not be said of such "Thou shalt find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest"? And in their captivity have they not "a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind" (Dent. 28: 65)? Are there not many in a like state to Israel when the Philistines and the Midianites got the mastery over them, so that they scarce dared show their faces, and reaped and threshed their very food with trembling?

God is not mocked. While all things are ours in Christ, we retain the enjoyment of them upon our obedience to His Word: "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love" (John 15:10).

A Word on the Subject of Repentance

Repentance is that state without which no sinner can be saved, and no wandering saint restored. It is not remorse (this Judas had) which lacks the element of piety. Nor is it mere sorrow for sin, for millions have regretted their deeds without a trace of repentance toward God. But it is self-judgment according to His Word, and as in His presence. It is not my back turned upon my wicked ways only, but upon myself-a moral revolution.

Read one of the most remarkable instances of repentance on record-"The men of Nineveh... repented at the preaching of Jonas" (Matt. 12:41)-as found in Jonah 3. There we see the king coming off his throne when he believed, with his conscience, the message of judgment. In pride of heart all are "kings" till grace restores our eyesight. The king laid aside his robe-self-righteousness. He put on another, of sackcloth -self-abhorrence, which is something more than hating an action. I hate myself for my evil deeds, if in God's presence. Then there was fasting, which is self-denial, and speaks of a condition of soul. Only the Lord Jesus can satisfy a soul in this condition:

"Now naught but Christ can satisfy,

None other name for me;

There's light and life and lasting joy,

Lord Jesus, found in Thee."

The king further told them to "cry mightily unto God," for as yet they knew not His mercy. But one in a state of true repentance will surely have it all out before God. Finally he said, "Let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands." This also must surely be. Sin is judged, not justified, and there is "fruit meet for repentance" in turning from the evil.

God did not disappoint them when they turned to Him after this fashion, nor will He disappoint anyone who takes his true place before Him.

Work for the Lord

The simple inquiry recorded as the first utterance of Paul to our Lord ("Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?") is the duty and expression of every one distinctly awakened to the claim Christ has on him. This inquiry cannot be too earnestly instituted, and the reply to it too rigidly attended to. The inquiry is the offspring of a soul sensible that the Lord has entire and full claim on it, without the knowledge which authorizes it. The soul feels, "I am taken out of the world, and I am given to Christ; and hence I look to Him for my place and future occupation in it." If we are given to Christ "out of the world," it is evident that it is He alone who has the right to determine our way and course in the world.

I could not say, if I believe that I am given to Him "out of the world," that I have any right to reoccupy any place or engagement which I had previously held in the world. True, He does not require or permit me to infringe on any legal lord under whom I was held before I was given to Him. But, excepting where the rights of others would be compromised, I am Christ's bondman. Vested legal rights are not to be compromised because of my being given to Christ. But I am Christ's bondman; and necessarily if I am, both from duty and inclination, my inquiry ought to be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

The more I own and realize the relationship between us, which now exists through grace, the more simply and continuously will this be my wholehearted cry to Him. Now if it is, I will of course accede and attend to whatever He may intimate to me, and this only. That is, the heart true and devoted to Him, making this request, will wait on Him for guidance and counsel. It would find no real satisfaction in being anywhere or doing anything which was not according to His mind. Our place and our occupation here would be only determined by the pleasure of Him whose we are and whom we serve. Any departure from the tie or the rule of this relationship would sensibly interfere with the mutual satisfaction therein known. There would be a break in upon, and a disturbance of, the true order of life and the blessings connected with it.

Nothing is so simple and nothing is so important in our walk down here; I belong to Christ, and I find it His pleasure and my happiness to do nothing but as He desires and instructs me. I live where He likes, and I do what He likes. If we did this, there would be no mistakes on one side or the other. But we do make mistakes on both sides - on one side at one time, and on another side at another time. At one we plan out work for ourselves, and at another we do none at all.

Now the first is the most difficult to deal with simply because the counterfeit deceives one; and hence, while it is comparatively easy to convict the Martha that she is unwisely occupied, the work seems so right and necessary that it appears almost impossible that there could be any plan in it. Nothing so deceives and leads astray as the conscience working at a distance from Christ. For instance, if I feel in my conscience that I ought to be Christ's servant (true enough, I am His bondman), but if I am not near Him, if I am not in His confidence, and I begin to do something to satisfy my conscience, there is no doubt I am doing it legally, and not as simply suits Him. It is to make myself easy and satisfied. When this is the case, I do not consult what He would like me to

do, but I do what I think best to be done. It is not His pleasure that guides me; it is my own mind as to what is suitable and proper. It may be quite necessary, as Martha's service; but Martha was evidently thinking of the services which were incumbent on her to render, and not governed by the pleasure of Christ.

Here is where we fail, undertaking to serve where it is in a degree creditable to ourselves, or we get disappointed (if we are truehearted) because we have not the acknowledgment of His pleasure. How can He acknowledge what we have undertaken and done to satisfy our own conscience, and to please ourselves therein? It is evident that when I am occupied with services (however useful and necessary, which I have undertaken of myself, feeling that they devolved upon me), I must lose the sense of His presence. Sitting at His feet, Mary-like, is lost and neglected. There is no growth of soul up into Christ. Self is in the service from beginning to end. It is most blessed to work for Christ; it is fruit-bearing. But if my work engrosses me more than Christ, there is damage to me, and I am not working for Him. "Without Me ye can do nothing." If I am working for Christ, and growing up into Him, sitting at His feet is the natural posture of my soul. Whenever you find anyone serving without sitting at His feet, you may be assured they are Martha-like. When any are sitting at His feet, hearing His word, they will not be behind in true service.

If you begin with serving (as many do nowadays), you will never sit at His feet; whereas if you begin with sitting there, you will soon serve wisely, well, and acceptably. The serving quiets the conscience, and the sitting is overlooked and neglected. The enemy gains an advantage, for it is at the sitting that the conscience is more enlightened, and the pleasure and mind of the Master are better known. Hence there is damage done, and loss is sustained by the soul, when service preoccupies one to the exclusion of sitting at His feet, or where service is most prominent.

I never met with anyone making service prominent who knew what it was to sit at His feet. But, thank God, I know indefatigable workers who enjoy sitting at His feet above any service. And it is clear that they who sit most at His feet must be competent to serve, and most in His confidence, which after all is the clue to all efficient service.

The Work of Grace: for Us and in Us

"Then were there two thieves crucified with Him; one on the right hand, and another on the left.

"And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." Matt. 27:38-44.

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Luke 23:39-43.

The Savior, the Son of man, was dying-the Just One in place of the many unjust-bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. This was His great work for us. But of the two malefactors between whom He was crucified, both of whom had reviled Him, one became converted, and showed a work of grace wrought in him.

The work of grace for us, and the work of grace in us, are not one and the same thing, any more than the death of Christ for the thief, and the change inside the thief (by the means of which he ceased to be a blasphemer, and owned Jesus) were one and the self-same thing. The former is outside of us, and was wrought by CHRIST; the latter is in ourselves, though wrought there by grace.

I desire to present a few thoughts which are connected with this most important subject.

First, What is it which hinders God and a sinner meeting and being together? True, the sinner's will is opposed to God; his heart's affections too are alienated from God; and doubtless if he, a sinner, were in the light of God's presence, he would find soon enough that the light of God's presence discovers all the sin of the creature. But the difficulty was not in the creature, however sunk, alienated, and deluded he may be, and however unsuited for such a one the holiness and majesty of God's presence may be. There was another question, one of far higher and deeper import; that is, How could God, in His holiness and righteousness, meet a sinner who has by sin done dishonor to God? Sin is an insult to God-to God in His majesty and being-and the soul that gets into the light knows this to be so.

As far as God is concerned, the work of grace in us is never separated from the work of grace for us. From the day of the fall and of man's exclusion from Eden, God wrought in man, but always

upon the ground of the work which He meant to do for man. And in working thus in man, He has constantly presented some object to the mind in which the work for man was shadowed forth.

The sacrifice offered by Abel, the victims of the patriarchal worship, the sacrifices of the sanctuary, etc., all pointed onward to the work which Christ was to do for man -a work by which alone God could be just while justifying a sinner, and which alone can ever satisfy the conscience of a sinner in the presence of God about sin. But the work in man preceded the work for man in all these cases. At Calvary the Son of man gave Himself a ransom for us. From that day onward the work of grace for man has had nothing added to it, nothing new from the time that "by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." But though the work for man is finished, yet the work of grace in man is quite as needful now as ever. That it is wrought in man by the Holy Ghost, through faith in the work accomplished for man, is true; but it must be wrought in man or man is lost.

The peculiarity of the conversion of the thief upon the cross is that it is a case in which grace was working in a man to open his heart to Christ at the very moment that Christ was doing for man that work without which no way. was opened for. God to bless, nor open for man to come for blessing.

On this account the distinctness of the two things is the more easily seen, and this may help some to see how they should not confound them together, and how impossible it would be for the one to be exchanged so as to be made to take the _place of the other.

Justice had brought the two thieves, for their misdeeds, to the violent death of the cross. There they were surrounded by a mass who were gathered to the spot to revile and blaspheme the crucified Savior.

The thieves heard the revilings and adopted them, for they cast the same in His teeth. But an entire change came over one of them. Light broke in upon his soul, and in his case it was the light of life-eternal life.

God had taken His rightful place in the man's soul. The effect was immediate; and, remark, he rebuked his fellow malefactor: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." When the candle of the Lord searches a man, it is sure to discover sin in him to himself. It must be so, for righteousness and holiness are inseparable from the light of God, and man is unholy. The light detects and shows the unholiness. Yet there is in this experience of the thief also another feeling expressed. He knew sin to be inseparable from himself; he knew it, and yet he sought to put it down with an unhesitating mind. He rebuked his fellow malefactor for doing the very thing which he himself had done just before, and the which he had but just ceased to do.

This was, as man would count it, practically inconsistent. Quite so. Conscience, when it gets into God's presence, and has the light of life, acts in a way which is very inconsistent with human thoughts of consistency and propriety. He was inconsistent as a man, but consistent as a saint. It is strange, that first dread and hatred of sin which leads us to put our mouths in the dust and to condemn sin in ourselves-part of our being as it may have been. But it is a blessed instinct of the new life, of life divine in a soul, that sin must be condemned, for it is hateful. This true taste of what sin is, is a very different thing from the dread of the consequences of sins. Dread of the consequences of sin and sins may alarm and terrify the soul, and drive it to seek a Savior. But the

light of life shining in quickening power into a soul separates between it and the sin itself-gives it an altogether new estimate of what sin is. "Dolt thou not fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss."

How full, both in the general statement and in the particular detail, is his confession of sin! What an abandoning and disclaiming of all human righteousness! "We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds."

And it was light, not vague and ill-defined, that shone in upon his soul, but clear and distinct; for it was the light of a contrast between the Christ of God and himself; "But this man hath done nothing amiss." Himself and the Christ were in his conscience, contrasted the one with the other. His language was that of faith; and, little as he knew it, he was, in the hour of the Lord's being forsaken by all, giving the description of Him which will be owned of God to be true of Christ alone. "This man hath done nothing amiss" will be loudly proclaimed as true of Christ alone in the glory; and all of us that will be there will know and own the perfectly graphic, distinctive description, as being His alone. Of Adam's race, from Eden down to the placing of the great white throne, there has not been one save the Seed of the woman of whom it could be said in truth, "This man hath done nothing amiss."

God, sin, himself, the Man that is Jehovah's fellow- these were not only new experiences of his soul, but they marked that he had a new life, and had got into a world of light where things are seen just as they are. But his faith went further, and he saw not only the personal peculiarity of the sinless One at his side, but also that there was in Him a heart on which, in spite of all the contrast between Christ and himself, he might cast his every care.

"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." The glories, and the kingdom, and the majesty of the Lord broke in upon his soul-sinner as he was-and yet he saw that in that One there was the only rest, the alone hope for him. This also is an instinct of the new nature. It will see and own the contrasts between the Christ and what we are, but it will cleave to Him in spite of our misery and His gloriousness-it will cleave to Him as being all our salvation.

If we are to be vessels filled with grace, we may be assured that there has been a somewhat similar work wrought in us-and we shall be able to record it as a work of the Lord in us-a work which puts us just where the Lord's work in the dying thief put him; that is, into the position of expecting from the Lord, into a position in which the Lord could show some of the exceeding riches of His grace, as He did in His answer to the thief. The thief asked to be remembered in the kingdom; Jesus answered, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

Christ had His rightful place in this poor sinner's soul, and no mistake about it; and this place was his from the time that the rocky heart was riven open. But what the thief experienced in his own soul-the blessed work which God was doing in the soul of the poor thief-while it fitted him to receive the grace, could not appear in heaven in place of the blood of the Lamb of God. It could neither justify God in justifying a thief, nor discover to the thief that which, in the light, is his justification before God. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Christ was then and there shedding His blood, giving His life, the Just One in place of the unjust. And whether that poor thief, or any other sinner, were ever saved or not, the way is plainly set forth in which God

declares that He is free to bless the vilest of the vile-the way too in which the vilest of the vile that comes by it finds a way of peaceful access to God.

If no one upon earth cared for that new and living way, yet it is a new and living way, and it is open-open for man to draw nigh to God, even into the holiest of all in the heavens.

The work of grace in us cannot be substituted for, cannot be put in the place of the work of grace for us; the work of grace in me cannot vindicate God's holiness so as to justify Him in moving in favor of me, a sinner. And, clearly, as far as it is a work of grace wrought in me by God, God has moved in my favor to work it ere it ever was wrought. And, moreover, it contains in it, for just the selfsame reason, no answer to my conscience if it is in the presence of God- nothing that can make for me a perfect conscience.

God has a right to act without man's leave, and in spite of man. None can say to Him, "What doest Thou?" But then He has a character of His own which He will not deny. And if He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion, He does so in a way which thoroughly vindicates His holiness and His justice; in a way which elevates conscience in man while it gives to it perfect liberty and boldness of approach to God in the light.

People may argue against justification by faith alone; but they may depend upon it that if they ever find themselves in the same light of life in which the poor thief found himself, they will find that they themselves appear very miserable, and that there is an attractive beauty about the Christ who is all the salvation of the soul.

Many may turn faith into a work for themselves to work, but they will find that the Spirit convicts of unbelief, and that all their rest is in the Lord Himself, and in the work He has wrought for poor sinners.

From the day of Pentecost the testimony of God has been about that work itself, and how heaven was opened thereby for the Holy Ghost to come down, and for man to draw near by faith.

When the testimony of God is received; for instance, about Christ as a new and living way (see Heb. 10), the soul that receives it finds its assurance to be in the work itself so presented to it-not in its own feelings, thoughts, or experiences about it, but in the work itself. For so has

God been pleased to settle it. The light shining in brings with it its own testimony. It places me in the sight of God upon His throne in heaven, _where He has placed Christ, who bare sin in His own body on the-tree, that He might become the new and living way of blessing from God to man, and of approach by man to God.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed as the God who has provided Himself a lamb, that His mercy and His compassion might be evident before all - heaven opened upon them.

That the heart of man is so wicked and so deluded that it cannot, will not, believe such things of God, is true - in this is seen the awfulness of man's condition. He must meet God, and he hates Him, and loves to nourish hard thoughts of Him. But when the light of life does break in, it is its own evidence.

Its entrance may not be understood at first, but the light will be found to be evidence of the subject whence it comes, and will be found to be the light of life.

Ye Are Not of the World: Something That Is a Fact

In John 17, Jesus, praying to His Father, said: "And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." vv. 13-16. And in John 15:18, 19: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

These two scriptures show clearly that the Lord's people are not of the world, even as He, and that as the world knew Him not, but hated Him, so must we meet with its hatred also. There is not a single thing in unison between the Christian and man's world. "The whole world lies in the wicked one." 1 John 5:19; J.N.D. Trans. But Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from" (out of) "this present evil world." Gal. 1:4.

The term, "world," is used in Scripture in different ways. We read of God making the worlds by His Son (Heb. 1:2). It expresses too the moral condition of unconverted men without God, living for self, time, and sense, so that the Lord said to His own, "If the world hate you." It also sets forth the system that men have built up on the earth, without God, whose elements are totally opposed to Him. Hence we find that John, in exhorting those classed as young men in his first epistle, says, "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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:15, 16.

Yet, although Christians are not of the world but, as elsewhere presented, a heavenly people, the greater number are left a while upon the earth to glorify God in their bodies till Christ returns. Hence we find ourselves in the midst of a vast system of things totally opposed to the new life which God has given us in His Son, and to everything that that life delights in. But we have also the Holy Spirit who is the power of that life and, walking by faith, we overcome the world, and pass through the midst of it unscathed by its manifold evil influences.

At the same time it is important to distinguish between worldly elements contrary to God, and things which are needful for the body in the circumstances in which we may be placed. There is a wide difference between the two. We have died with Christ, and hence we are dead to sin (Rom. 6) but not to nature. We are now risen in Christ, and can enjoy communion with God. And if we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (which of course remains in us, and lusts the moment it is allowed), nor yield to the evil of the world while seeking to use natural things in the fear of God, and for His glory, watching always lest even any natural blessing that He has given us should in any way become our snare.

Now Satan uses the world in different ways to hold men in his power, and to draw away the hearts of Christians from God and the simplicity which is in Christ. We may divide the moral state of the world around us under at least five heads; namely, wicked, worldly, social, political, and religious. Christ, as we have already cited, gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from (out of) this present evil world (Gal. 1:4), and that in every form in which we come in contact with it. Let us seek briefly to present what we mean by these different terms.

First, the wicked world. We speak thus of the world of the ungodly, of men following their own unbridled will, and the lusts and desires of their evil hearts. Ungodliness abounds - all kinds of license, revelry, and open and secret wickedness. Men, with no fear of God before their eyes (Rom. 3:18), indulge their lusts and passions, and the desires of their hearts and minds, in gluttony, drunkenness, immorality, infidelity, blasphemy, etc., etc. Now surely no one with any pretensions to Christianity would sanction such manifest evil for a moment. Even the natural conscience of thousands is shocked at such things. Men of the world themselves would not believe in the Christianity of the man who followed such practices. A Christian is saved to sin no more, and it would be difficult to find one who would not own at once that these things were sins, and must be wholly refused and shunned.

Second, the worldly world. By this term we would present the world of fashion and vanity, folly and pride, etc. Alas! how many true children of God, as well as carnal professors, are more or less ensnared by the world in this aspect. There are numbers of believers who are sheltered from judgment under Christ's precious blood, who seem to have no idea that His death has not only saved them from the consequence of their sin, but also laid them under obligation to refuse the world. It is only too often the case that there is no real deliverance in the soul; they have never learned that they have died with Christ (Rom. 6), and are now before God in Him, privileged and responsible to live Christ henceforth. And did that blessed, perfect One follow the fashion, vanity, folly, and pride of this world? Far be the thought. All these things are of the flesh, and the flesh was judicially dealt with at the cross, and set aside by God once and forever as utterly incorrigible and worthless. We are saved to give no place to the flesh, and to refuse all worldliness as part of that system that Satan and men have built up here without God.

Third, the social world. All our readers doubtless know the meaning of the word "social." Now this is one of the most specious forms in which Satan presents the world to our hearts, in order to allure us from Christ and the things unseen and eternal. Thousands who refuse the wickedness of the flesh, and the gross worldliness of Vanity Fair, readily excuse themselves and others for a little social worldliness. We might give details of what we mean, but it would carry us beyond our limits in this paper. But think for a moment of the thousand and one things that Christians go on with every day in the home circle, and the social intercourse of life, which are merely for selfish pleasure, or to please others, regardless of whether they are pleasing to God. How often the exercised Christian hears the words, "I don't think there is any harm in this or that"; or "So-and-so does it, and therefore there cannot be any harm in it" (very low ground, to say the least) - and no thought whatever as to whether it is according to the Word, and for the glory of God. Is the practical Christianity of the Bible to go world-bordering, as nearly as possible, without openly going into it? or is it a positive thing? "To me to live is Christ," said Paul. This is a sure test. Not "Is there any harm?" but, "Is it Christ?" "Is it Christ-like?" "Is it suited to Him?" "Is it according to the Word of God?" "Will He be glorified by it?" He who loves us as He loves His own Son, withholds no joy or

pleasure from His people that is good for us, and expressly forbids all that is bad. He has connected His glory with us, and it is only the study of His Word, under the teaching of the Spirit, that will enable us to know what is suited to Him, and what will glorify Him.

Fourth, the political world. The meaning of this familiar expression is well known. The question is, What is the relation of the Christian to it? God has His' ways in government in the world, as well as His ways in grace; and we read that there is no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1). If our readers will weigh the opening verses of this chapter, they will see that the whole teaching is that the Christian should be subject to such, rendering tribute, custom, fear, honor, etc., to those to whom they are due. But there is not one word about our taking part in the rule. And why? Because Christians are a heavenly people, and their citizenship is heavenly (1 Cor. 15:48; Phil. 3:20). What has a foreigner to do with the government? Nothing whatever. All he has to do, if he lives

in a country, is to be subject to the rulers and the laws. So also the Christian is a stranger and a pilgrim here (1 Pet. 2:11). He belongs to another country, and, therefore, as long as he dwells upon earth, he has but to be subject to the laws of those ruling. This simplifies matters immensely for us, if we will only be simple about it all. If we begin to reason about it, we shall form mere human conclusions which are contrary to the Word of God. Faith acts in simple, wholehearted obedience to what God says. Minding earthly things is one of the characteristics of the enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18, 19).

When Christians get linked with the world, whether in government or anything else, they are sure to become losers in their own souls. It is impossible to get the political world to act on Christian principles according to the Word of God (although it may be more or less influenced by Christianity), and therefore, sooner or later, as has often been practically proved, the Christian necessarily succumbs in some measure to worldly principles, unless he breaks away to go on with God. What part has he that believes with an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14-18)? The Christian's ruling time is future. When the Lord judges and reigns, we shall judge and reign with Him (1 Cor. 4:8; 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12).

Fifth, the religious world. This is the worst form of evil before God, because it is the corruption of that which is most immediately connected with Himself in His relations with men. Nowhere, and in no way, have men more grievously sinned against God than in connection with holy things. All around us at the present moment, more or less throughout Christendom, we see the results of Satan's power and man's self-will. Vast religious systems, formed of mixed principles of Christianity, Judaism, and heathenism, are maintained and carried on to a very great extent by unconverted men, or by converted and unconverted together - worldly elements of all kinds abound to suit the eye and heart of man, though ostensibly for the glory of God. All sorts of worldly practices (in some instances even unrighteous) are resorted to, to support them. "My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:31). Oh, what indeed?

What is the Christian's path? Separation. Separation from all evil, doctrinal or practical, as proved by the sure Word of God, and a path in fellowship with all who do the same (2 Tim. 2:19-22). Thousands are misled by the subtleties of Satan, who clothes worldliness with religious titles, or introduces a little religion to make worldliness less objectionable, so that those who otherwise would have a bad conscience become his dupes. Nothing but cleaving to God's Word and making

a clean sweep of all religious worldliness, is worthy of Him whose holy name we bear, and "who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world," in its religious as well as in any other form.

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16), saith the Lord. This is unmistakably plain. We are responsible then to refuse the world, and the things in it, in whatever form Satan may present them to our hearts, whether wicked, worldly, social, political, or religious. "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). May the Lord graciously exercise the heart of every Christian who reads these lines, that we may be occupied with Him and heavenly things, in simple faith rising superior to all in the world, so leaving it practically behind us, and pressing on to the glory until we behold Him face to face, for His own precious name's sake.

A Letter to Young Christians

My Dear Friends,

A young man recently said to me, "It scares me that so many vital decisions must be made when we are young and immature."

Many of us are at this moment making lifelong decisions: deciding whether to go farther in school, choosing a vocation, or a marriage partner. These decisions will mark or shape the whole of our lives, yet they must be made at a time when we have the least experience and accumulated knowledge. This is what was causing my young friend so much frustration and anguish.

Our hearts go out to young people who are in earnest, yet are honestly perplexed as to what to do - what choice to make. The world seems like a maze. Then, too, pressures are often exerted from all sides. Some people beckon this way, and some things that way.

But we find as we grow older, that important decisions daily confront us-that one's life is full of choices.

The believer has a tremendous advantage over the man of the world in this area of decision making. As children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, we have One to guide and direct us. Our God and Father delights in our, depending on Him, for this expresses trust and confidence. Oh, may we know more of His heart of love toward us!

There was a young man Moses-who decided to identify himself with God's people, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God,... he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:25-27). He had his eyes on God-on the future- and thus made his choice.

But there was a situation in that young man's life when he didn't have his eyes on God, but "looked this way and that way" (Exod. 2:12). He was being influenced by the fear of man. He had a desire to do the right thing, but he wasn't guided by the Word of God.

Dear young Christian friend, you have the very resources of God at your disposal if you will but use them! "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Pro. 3:6.

"I will guide thee with Mine eye" (Psalm 32:8). "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word." Psalm 119:9.

Let us not lower our standards to the level of those about us, nor let us be looking "this way and that way" for direction or approval from others. But let us be looking to Jesus and into His Word, and so be guided in all that we do. Then we shall not find decision-making "scary." Another has said, "All our difficulties result from the neglect of God's Word."

We may not have much experience or knowledge, but "the sheep hear his voice" (John 10:3, 4). He goes before us in the way of life and of faith, and in this manner the young - and older too - are kept.

The wise of this world - without reference to God's will - wish to know everything, but are often deceived. Let us be simple and quietly listen for the great Shepherd's voice; then we shall be led aright.

The young man, Moses, learned the secret of victory, and in later life could say to the people, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.... The LORD shall fight for you." In this attitude of soul the Lord could say to him, "Go forward." (Exod. 14:13-15.) Likewise as to ourselves, there is no other way for blessing, peace, or to give honor to the Lord Jesus, who died for us and lives for us.

In closing, my friends, one more thing. In our looking to God and His Word for direction and help, let us be prepared for stubborn resistance from our worst enemy-self. We shall find as we seek to go on in a way pleasing to the Lord, that it is often contrary to our own thoughts and plans, as well as to those of others who seem to have a concern for us. But if we would live happy and fruitful lives, it can only be found in death to self and a complete surrender to our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

"Bear not a single care thyself,

One is too much for thee;

The work is Mine, and Mine alone;

Thy work-to rest in Me."

Affectionately in the Lord

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