

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 26

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A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 26, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

117 Chapters

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Christian Truth Volume 26

Abide in Me

On that touching occasion when the Lord was alone with His disciples, communicating His farewell words of comfort, and imparting to them His last instructions, again and again He presses the deep necessity, as well as the blessedness, of abiding in Him. We hear Him say:

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing.... If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." John 15:4-7.

Again, the beloved Apostle, who heard these farewell words from the lips of the Lord, passes them on to believers in his epistle. There we read,

"He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." 1 John 2:6.

"And now, children, abide in Him, that if He be manifested we may have boldness, and not be put to shame from before Him at His coming." 1 John 2:28; J.N.D. Trans.

"Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" (1 John 3:6).

If then these verses set before us the blessedness of abiding in Christ, we may well pause to inquire, What are we to understand by the Lord's words, "Abide in Me"? Do they not imply a walk in such nearness to Christ that the soul delights in all His loveliness and moral excellencies, and thus finds in Him its object and perfect pattern?

Again, does not abiding in Christ suppose a heart in communion with Christ, that delights to confide in Him and learn of Him?

Above all, does not abiding in Christ imply a life lived under the influence of His presence, realized by faith? If a saintly and Christ-like man of God visited our home, would not his presence have a restraining influence upon everyone in the home? We should probably be a little more careful than usual of our words and ways. If this would be the effect of the presence of a man of like passions with ourselves, what would be the effect of the realized presence of Christ Himself? At times sad scenes have taken place, even among the Lord's people, in which we may have had our humbling part, when envy and strife prevailed, and believers have thoughtlessly, or even maliciously, wounded one another with bitter and offensive words. We may try to excuse our strong words. But should we not do well to ask ourselves, What would have happened if the Lord had silently but visibly walked into our midst? Should we not have to confess that under the influence of His presence many a bitter and offensive word would never have been uttered?

How good then it would be if we could ever remember that, though the Lord is not visible to sight, yet He hears, He sees, He knows. Well indeed does the psalmist ask, "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?... He that teacheth man knowledge,

shall He not know?" Psalm 94:9, 10.

To walk then in the consciousness that He listens to our words; that He sees our every act; that He reads our thoughts, is to walk under the blessed influence of His presence and thus abide in Him.

Furthermore, these scriptures that exhort us to abide in Christ, tell us also the blessedness we shall enjoy if we do abide in Him.

First, we learn that abiding in Christ we shall bring forth fruit. The importance of this is pressed upon us by being stated both negatively and positively. We are told that unless we abide in Christ we cannot bring forth fruit. Then we are told that if we abide in Christ, and He in us, we shall bring forth much fruit. From another scripture we learn that the fruit of the Spirit •is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23; J.N.D. Trans.). What are these lovely qualities but a description of the beautiful character of Christ? So we may surely say that the fruit of which the Lord speaks is the reproduction of His own character in the lives of believers.

The fruit in this passage is not service or the exercise of gift, however important in its place. Of necessity gifts are confined to the few; but it is open to all, young and old alike, to express something of the loveliness of Christ in their lives. Any little setting forth of the graces of Christ goes up as fruit to the Father, and goes out as testimony to the world. This then is the great object for which we are left in this dark world, to shine as lights by exhibiting something of the beautiful character of Christ. This will only be possible as we abide in Christ. We shall never exhibit the character of Christ by simply trying to be like Christ. If, however, we seek His company, and come under His influence, by abiding in Him, we shall be changed into His image from glory to glory.

"Yet sure, if in Thy presence

My soul still constant were,

Mine eye would, more familiar,

Its brighter glories bear.

"And thus, Thy deep perfections

Much better should I know,

And with adoring fervor,

In this Thy nature grow."

Second, the Lord's words plainly tell us that abiding in Christ our prayers will have an answer. If under the blessed influence of His presence, with His words abiding in our hearts, our thoughts would be formed by His thoughts, and our prayers would be in accord with His mind. Thus praying, we should have an answer to our prayers.

Third, the Apostle John tells us in his epistle that abiding "in Him" will lead to a "walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). How did Christ walk? Of Him we read, "Christ pleased not Himself." Speaking of the Father, the Lord Himself could say, "I do always those things that please Him." This is the perfect pattern for the believer's walk, for the Apostle Paul can say, we "ought to walk

and to please God" (1 Thess. 4:1). Again, the same Apostle exhorts believers to "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us" (Eph. 5:2).

Thus may we not say the outstanding marks of the Lord's path were the entire absence of self-will in doing the Father's will, and the serving of others in love. For us, it is only possible in any measure to tread such a path of perfection

as we abide in Christ. How good then like Mary of old to sit at His feet and hear His words. Thus, under His influence to recall His path, to trace His footsteps, to listen to His words of love and grace, to see His hand stretched forth to bless, and, behind all His perfect walk and ways and words to discern the spirit of One who ever set aside all thoughts of self in order to serve others in love.

We may know the doctrines of Christianity; we may rightly hold the great essential truths of our faith; but, as one has said, "No amount of knowledge, however correct, no amount of intelligence, however exact, will ever put upon your soul the impress of the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ." If we are to wear the impress of Christ-if, as we pass along, we are to have some sense of Him-we must be in His company, and walk with Him. Every man is formed by the company that he keeps; the character of the one in whose company we walk, is the character we shall reflect. We must abide in Christ and thus walk with Christ, if we are to be like Christ and walk as He walked.

Fourth, the Apostle John further tells us that if abiding in Christ our walk will be such that we shall not be ashamed before Christ at His coming. Oftentimes there is much in our walk, and ways, and speech, and manners, that passes current with men, and even among the people of God, and of which we may judge very lightly when viewed by human standards. If, however, we were to judge ourselves, and our words, and ways, in the light of the coming glory of the appearing of Christ, should we not find much that we should have to condemn, and confess with shame, as far short of the standard of glory?

Only as we abide in Christ, under the influence of His presence, and so walk in self-judgment, shall we be preserved from all that which would cause shame in the day of glory. Fifth, we are reminded by the Apostle John, that "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" (1 John 3:6). From the preceding verses we learn what the Spirit of God means by sin; for we read in verse 4, "Sin is lawlessness" (J.N.D. Trans.). The essence of sin is doing one's own will without reference to God or man. The world around is increasingly marked by lawlessness-everyone doing that which is right in his own eyes, the result being that, in spite of civilization, education, and legislation, the world system is breaking up, and society and nations are increasingly disintegrating. Wherever the spirit of lawlessness prevails, disintegration will follow, whether it be in the world or among the people of God. As believers, we are ever in danger of being affected by the spirit of the world around. Thus it has come to pass that through lack of watchfulness, the same principle of lawlessness that is breaking up the world system, has wrought division and scattering among the people of God.

If, in a school, each pupil was allowed to do his own will, the school would inevitably break up. If each member of a family followed his own will, the family would be wrecked; and if each individual of a company of believers pursues his own will, disruption must follow. The spirit of lawlessness, in whatever sphere it shows itself, will lead to disintegration; and the greater the sincerity of those

who pursue their own will, the greater the harm they will cause. There is no greater cause of disruption among the people of God than the determined self-will of a sincere man.

How then are we to escape the evil principle of lawlessness, or self-will? Only by abiding in Christ; for the Apostle says, "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not." Only as we are held under the influence of the One who could say, "I come,... not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me," shall we escape the self-will that is the very essence of sin.

These then are the blessed results, as brought before us in Scripture, of abiding in Christ. If answering to the Lord's words by seeking to abide in Him, our lives would bear fruit by expressing something of the lovely character of Christ.

Our prayers, being according to His mind, would have an answer.

Our path would show forth something of the beauty of His walk.

Our ways would be consistent with the coming glory of Christ.

Our walk would be preserved from the lawlessness of the flesh that has its origin in the devil, that is the root cause of the ruin of man, and the sorrows of the world.

How good then to heed the Lord's word, "Abide in Me,... for without Me ye can do nothing." We may be gifted and have all knowledge and zeal; we may have long experience, but it still remains true that without Christ we can do nothing. Gift and knowledge and zeal are not power. All these things will not enable us to overcome the flesh, to refuse the world, or escape the snares of the devil. We may have all these things, and yet without Christ we may stumble at the smallest trial and fall into the greatest evils.

If then without Christ we can do nothing, let us seek to abide in Him and not dare to go forward for one day, or take a single step, without Him.

"O keep my soul, then Jesus,

Abiding still with Thee;

And if I wander, teach me,

Soon back to Thee to flee."

An Open Fountain and an Empty Bucket

Have you counted on God as an opened fountain in which your empty bucket can be let down to be filled? In the midst of the wreck and ruin of the creature, can you say, notwithstanding it all, "I have found a spring in Thee, O God! and can count on Thee to give me all blessing in Christ - not to fill me once, and then all gone, but filling again and again"? I would have you judge yourselves about the sort of faith you have. Is it a living faith? It is the living God upon whom His people hang, drawing daily supplies from the fullness of the living springs in Him. Ah! if you have found that God, no depths can be too deep for the heart of that living God who meets us according to the circumstances in which we are.

G.V.W.

An Ancient Institution: Marriage

Marriage was instituted in the garden of Eden, and it vividly displays the nearness of relationship into which believers are to be brought, as the Church and bride of Christ, to Himself. Moreover, the familiarity of our minds with the relationship makes us understand better the place to which we are brought in the gracious affections of Christ. There are many things which are the blessed and substantial revelations of God, that we cannot so well understand; for example, the reign of Christ in glory, and our association with Him in that reign, however blessed it may be, can hardly be definitely familiarized to the mind. But everything around the Christian in this world serves to illustrate what this blessed relationship is between Christ and the Church.

Eve was to Adam the companion of his home, and the depositary of his affections. So "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it"; and the fact that she becomes the depositary and witness of His affections, is a thought more deeply touching than all the glory which will be her endowment as allied to Christ.

The purpose of Christ's ministry toward His Church is "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word"; and the end of that ministry is "that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Just as Eve was for Adam himself, so is the Church to be for Christ Himself.

At God's Right Hand

It is most blessed to see that in the cross the moral nature of God, outraged by man's sin, has been perfectly glorified. Christ would rather die than let sin subsist unatoned for. He has wrought atonement, and sin has been perfectly judged according to God's estimate of its sinfulness before Him. God, having been thus glorified by the Son of man, has shown His estimate of that Man and of His work by putting

Him into glory at His own right hand. Faith perceives this, and immediately reckons - and rightly too - that every question of sin must have been divinely settled to the entire satisfaction of God. The result for the soul is solid peace in the sense of acceptance in Christ in divine righteousness.

The Difference Between Bigotry and Faithfulness

These are days when things are breaking up. Infidelity is rising like a surging flood on every hand, and that which is affecting the world is affecting the Church. Old landmarks are being rapidly swept away, and those of yesterday are not those of today. The plenary inspiration of Scripture, the doctrine of the atonement, the deity of Christ's Person, eternity of punishment - all are held by many as exploded theories of an unenlightened past.

Young Christians are more or less influenced by all this, and if they stand up boldly and faithfully for the very words and authority of the Scriptures, they are often dubbed "bigots" for their pains. No, dear young Christian, do not allow terms such as these to close your mouths for Christ, but pray God to give you strength to be faithful to Him and to His Word.

Paul knew that after his departure grievous wolves would enter in among the saints, not sparing the flock, and from among themselves should men arise speaking perverse things, drawing disciples after them. But what does the front rank man of Christianity do? Does he give them some well-worded creed to stand by, or some powerful arguments of his to meet the evil teachers with? No; He commends them to God and the word of His grace (Acts 20:28-31). Our strength lies in dependence upon God, and cleaving closely to His Word. We may not be able to understand it all, but we can exercise faith in God and His Word, and we shall thus be led on. For instance, how many doubt the first chapter of Genesis, and tell us what science has brought to bear on the question. But what saith the Scriptures?

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." Heb. 11:3. Faith in the Word of God leads us triumphantly through no end of difficulties. Then these enlightened (so-called) individuals turn round and call us bigots. Bigotry is blindly adhering to a creed. Bigotry leads to illogical positions, to a hard, dry, unfeeling line of action. But faithfulness to God does just the opposite. However, faith is outside the province of these doubters. The joy of the Holy Ghost is unknown by them. The power of conversion has not affected them or their lives.

They may admire the terse, forcible language of the Scriptures, its poetry, its history, its moral grandeur, but they know not its power when applied to the heart and conscience by the Spirit of God. All these facts and experiences are foreign and unknown to them.

We asked a young man, converted a few weeks ago, if he understood the Bible better since he was converted. He answered in the affirmative, and agreed that before he was saved it was like a dead man coming to a living Book, and now (through the grace of God) it was a living man coming to a living Book, and a stream of blessing passing from it to him. Those who are seeking to undermine the authority of the Scriptures, and the wondrous truths of Christianity, have no conception of their own utter badness, and God's inflexible righteousness. They have never gotten into His presence, and so they can talk, talk, talk.

The young men in 1 John 2:14 are strong because the Word of God abides in them. What a secret of power! May we be kept thus proof against all the assaults of the enemy, whether as a roaring

lion or clothed as an angel of light.

May bigotry never be ours, but unflinching faithfulness in these last and perilous days. May the hope of the Lord's near coming quicken our weary and lagging feet. The sight of His face-never to be withdrawn - will soon gladden our eyes, and fill our hearts with untold joy.

The Blessed Hope

I rejoice in the thought that every setting sun is bringing us nearer and nearer to a world where suns will never set - where we shall walk together forever in an atmosphere of light and glory - where all the desire, longing, and hopes of our hearts shall be fully met. How blessed to feel that we have such a hope! How wonderful that while the world is following after shadows, and walking in a vain show, we know and love the truth - that ours are hopes which will not, cannot, deceive.

The Christian and His Livelihood

Unquestionably many a Christian is called to pass through this world earning bread for himself and his family. And it is well that it should be so. Few of us can bear not to be occupied thus. Nor is there any reason why our blessed Lord should not be served thus with all the heart, why there should not be a true and energetic and affectionate service rendered to His name while the hands thus provide (whether for the family or for individual need) what little is required here below. But the moment you regard your occupation as something of honor in the world, you are lost to the testimony of Christ on high. I do not deny that the grace of God may call persons actively engaged in that which is highly esteemed among men. You have known, of course, of men thus called of God, while they were entering on or engaged in that which the natural heart values. And you may have seen some under such circumstances exhibit very great simplicity there. I am not saying now that it is wrong to have what men call a profession; I am using the heavenly glory of Christ to judge the spirit in which all that is in the world is ordered; and I do warn you against the vainglory of men in these things-the desire and hankering after earthly distinction, the valuing of things for self and family-carried away in our thoughts and feelings by that which the world thinks of them.

As Christ's hour was not yet come, so neither is ours. If we are His, we have nothing to do with anything, even the pettiest shred, of this world's glory. Be assured, it is only a patch of dishonor for the child of God now. It matters little what the world's prize may be. Why should we want it? Are not all things ours? Shall we not judge the world - aye, angels? I do not dwell on the fact, that these present objects so often bear the very stamp of their own insignificance and worthlessness upon them, that their sages confess that the good is in the chase, not in the game. Who does not know that even a "ribbon" is enough reward for some men's lifelong exertions? These otherwise are sensible men.

Suffer me then to press the importance to the Christian of watching against the world, and of looking to Christ on high, in taking up whatever he does, whether for himself or for his children. I do not mean anything so preposterous as that Christianity calls on all believers to seek one dead level of occupation, or that there is any faith in one's abandoning the circumstances in which one is called, if one can abide therein with God, or in seeking an occupation that is entirely unsuitable. This I do not call faith, but folly. But giving full weight to all this, let me press, that if anything, no matter what it may be, is to be done day by day, whether it be in the factory or in the office, there is but one worthy motive for the Christian - doing all to the Lord. If assured that we are doing His will, we can do either the one or the other with a good conscience and a happy heart. The ruinous thing for the Christian is to forget that we are here to do God's will, and to be witnesses of a rejected Christ glorified in heaven.

But what is the world's greatest desire? Pushing forward, doing something great; and what we today achieve made a steppingstone for something more tomorrow. All this is thoroughly a denial of the Christian's place, and proves that the heart's desire is in the current of the world. It may be natural for a man to wish to be something easier and greater in the earth; but, beloved, where is

the heart's allegiance to Christ? Is it so, that after all one prefers the first Adam to Christ? This is really the question - Do I value most the first Adam or the Second? If my heart is given to the Second Man, am I not to prove it in what I do every day? Is the honor of Christ only for the Sunday? Surely this is not fealty to our Chief! Have you then been called by the grace of God to have His Son revealed in you while in a position which the world counts mean and dishonorable? Be it so. What more admirable opportunity for the faith which judges by Christ in glory whether you can thus abide with God? I do not ask you to follow this man or that, but to search the Word of God, and judge how far in your position you can honor Christ as He is. For are we not to be His epistle, known and read of all men? Is it not thus that the rivers of living water flow from Him out of us? Believe me, there is nothing of Christ in clutching what one has got, upholding one's rights and dignities, even if ever so real in the world's eyes, in an age which slights authority. Quite as little of Christ is there in him of low degree, who keenly seizes opportunities to urge his way steadily forward to what he values in this world. On the other hand, whether you are high or low, as men speak, you have an opportunity of approving what you think of Christ. Whatever the trial may be, it is but a little offering to show what Christ is in our eyes.

But for guidance there is no criterion but God's Word. Vain and foolish is our wisdom in such things; it is a question of the will of the Lord. Everything turns upon this. The whole matter for Christian conscience, no matter what the position of the believer may be, comes to this, that each of us has an opportunity of doing His will, of being His servant, of showing that we value Him infinitely above the world. My blessing is, no matter what the Lord gives me to do, therein to be content. Of the circumstances which are best for His glory, and for me His servant here below, He is the only good judge. Let me value them simply as an opportunity of setting forth His praise, prizing most of all what the world hates. As to any occupation, I must repeat, that high or low in men's eyes, it should be in mine, NOTHING. Undoubtedly the world dislikes this. What! an honorable profession only a means of livelihood? Exactly so; a crucified Savior now in glory makes short work of the world and all that is in it. Take an example. I am going to work as an accountant. Is it my aim to be the best accountant in London? Suppose me a doctor; do I covet the largest practice in this city? Is there anything of Christ in these wishes? Is this practically to own the glorified Jesus? Am I really taking up my work from Him and doing it for Him? Our hearts know well, if the Lord actually gave us anything to do for Him, how love would express itself in doing the work well. Far be the thought that Christians should count it a virtue to be loose and negligent in the way they discharge their business! Certainly there is nothing that becomes a man, not to speak of a saint, in being a sloven. The point of faith, whatever we may have to do, is this - that, be it a little thing or the greatest, it is all done for Him.

Thus we testify, even in daily conversation too that we are not living to self or the world, but to Him who died and rose; and we shall surely have the power of the Spirit with us in all. Sweet testimony, though in the otherwise perishable things which pertain to this world; but it is a testimony which shall not pass away. We are but passing through a strange land; our home is with Christ; but we are where the Lord has called and put us for the present. Here we stay as long as He bids us work for Him; we journey at the commandment of the Lord; at the commandment of the Lord we abide. And so it is we are for Him to dispose of. We are In the wilderness; but meanwhile, instead of only drinking of a rock outside, we have a well within, yea, rivers of water flow out of us. It is the joy of Jesus reproducing itself here below - the power of the Spirit of God giving the heart now its

present delight in Him above. There is the abounding sense that we belong to Him who is there now. All the glory of this world is judged as the merest trash - as only the delusive tinsel of the devil to amuse a judged and perishing world.

Beloved, I would ask how far your souls are seeking this, and this only. I would ask myself the same thing. I desire grace from God that none of the truth which He is pleased to bring before us may degenerate into words of barren knowledge. Pardon me if I feel that none have to watch against this danger so much as ourselves. The mercy of God has been awakening His children, has called, or rather recalled, them to this truth, and much more- to the faith that was once delivered to the saints. It is an immense blessing, but along with it is just the responsibility and the danger.

Who are most exposed to losing it and of becoming its bitter foes? Those who having known the truth like this cease to live in it and to love it. How can it be lived in, unless Christ and not self be the object of our souls? Substitute for Him any thought of our ease or reputation, and all is defiled, all becomes polluted in its very spring. The Lord only knows what might be the end of such folly, save only for the grace of God which, as it took us up when there was not one right affection toward Him, and maintained us despite all our wretchedness, so can intercept the full results of our unfaithfulness and ingratitude. That blessed God who has Christ before Him, and has now the glorifying of Him by us in hand, does at the same time allow a sufficient play of moral responsibility in proof of what unbelief does even with a saint. But He can and does restore. May we count on His grace to keep as well as restore, while discerning His judgment of things and persons, and treating unsparingly all that which slights His Word, and takes advantage of grace to deny the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord make and keep us lowly! May He so give us to see Himself in glory that all which is of this world may be ever judged in our eyes as awaiting only the hour of the harvest and of the vintage which is not yet come. Our joy is come in His glorification meanwhile, and in the Holy Spirit given to us before that hour. Jesus we know in heavenly glory, and that He has already sent down the Holy Spirit to bring us into the present power of glory. May we be vessels of His testimony; it may be, needing to be broken that the rivers may flow out the more freely, but nevertheless channels through which the rivers of living water flow, to the praise of His own grace and glory!

The Christian Motto

"He must increase, but I must decrease." John 3:30.

It is while living and walking about down here that we ought to be able, nevertheless, to say, "I die daily"; and what is a dead man but a useless man as to this world, and one repulsive and obnoxious to all its schemes? And such we are in God's account; "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Col. 3:3. And such we are to be practically. Is it comely for a Christian to be reaching after earthly honors, riches, reputation, or aught else here below; and if doing so, has he learned the meaning of "He must increase, but I must decrease"? Is not the name of Christian (that worthy name upon you, by which ye are called) often scoffed and mocked at on these very points, because of the inconsistencies of those who bear it? Of the whole course of the Lord Jesus it is written, He "made Himself of no reputation."

Alas, that it should not be so with all of us. Alas, that with even some of us, God's finger is upon us; and our consciences are telling us as to this, "Thou art the man." Yet it is only by thus taking our true places before God as to these things, with a real desire for Him to deal with us, that we are profited by speaking of them together. We are in our folly sacrificing the present enjoyment of the eternal, for the passing pleasure of the temporal, for no man can enjoy both. A remarkable illustration of this is given us if we turn to Hebrews 12. There Esau comes before us, "who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." With the birthright went the blessing of the firstborn. But this blessing had especial reference to the 'future, to the Messiah who was to come, the promised Seed of which God had spoken to Abraham, in whom "all the families of the earth" were to be blessed. (See Gen. 28:3-15.) The mess of pottage, the satisfaction of the moment, the pleasing of nature, was preferred to the whole blessed range of God's promises by Esau; and what does Scripture say of such? It calls Esau a "profane person" - one who preferred the enjoyment of the present to the glorious realities awaiting him in the future. It is the contrast between faith and sight.

My brethren, we too are blessed. The blessing of the "firstborn from the dead" is upon us. "He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Luke 24:50, 51. But it is not earthly but heavenly-not true for sight, but real to faith. Are we enjoying it, making much of it? He is gone up. Thence He is coming again in "like manner." "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," we are waiting for Him here, until the time comes when, according to God's eternal purpose, He will "gather together in one all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:9, 10). Seeing that we have learned, poor ignorant scholars, that in all things He shall "have the preeminence," that it is God's must concerning Him (1 Cor. 15:25), are we saying and practically seeking to carry it out, "He must increase, but I must decrease"? Or are we like Esau despising the blessing, gathering to ourselves the poor, passing, and empty things of earth, none of which we can take with us, upon which (the flesh in us and all that ministers to it) our God has stamped "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Ah, which is it with you? One thing is certain, we are each saying or practicing in our ways day by day either this, "He must increase," or this, / must increase; and you cannot change the one word without changing the

other. If you say, I must increase, you must add, He must decrease; and in our souls we bear witness that this is so. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is seen daily in the condition and ways of God's people as to this very truth. Is it then your purpose to show in your life that the words of John the Baptist are your motto? May it be so, and may the Lord give His word power over our souls for His name's sake.

Christ's Last Words

As the years roll over us, it is well to ponder our blessed Lord's last utterance to His Church. It seems to have been left last on record that, whatever else might be forgotten through lapse of time, the blessed promise then given might linger on the heart and ear of His loving people. Like the last words of a valued friend, a parting legacy ever to be remembered, so should we treasure these words of our Lord, "I come quickly."

Prophecies of woe untold, and of bliss unsearchable, had filled the wonderful "book of this prophecy"; but it was neither the woe nor the bliss that was preeminently to occupy the mind of the reader, but his personal relation to Christ, and the pledge of His return. Hope and fear may alike forget this central object, the Person of Christ, if love rule not; and He knows how prone love is to wax cold, even as it had done in the church at Ephesus, amid her activities and zeal, her labor and patience. "First love" will only be kept alive as the Person of the Lord is kept preeminently in view.

Christ's Sympathy

It is well to bear in mind that this is not the day of Christ's power, but it is the day of His sympathy. When passing through the deep waters of affliction, the heart may at times feel disposed to ask, Why does not the Lord put forth His power and deliver me? The answer is, This is not the day of His power.

He could prevent that catastrophe. He could avert that sickness. He could remove that difficulty. He could take off that pressure. He could preserve that beloved and fondly cherished object from the cruel grasp of death. But instead of putting forth His power to deliver us, He allows things to run their course and pours His own sweet sympathy into the oppressed and riven heart, in such a way as to elicit the acknowledgment that we would not for worlds have missed the trial, because of the abundance of the consolation.

By-and-by He will display His power; He will unsheath His sword; He will come forth as the rider on the white horse. He will bare His arm; He will avenge His people, and right their wrongs forever.

But now His sword is sheathed, His arm covered; this is the time for making known the deep love of His heart, not the power of His arm, nor the sharpness of His sword.

Are you satisfied to have it so? Is Christ's sympathy enough for your heart, even amid the keenest sorrow, and the most intense affliction?

The restless heart, the impatient spirit, the unmortified will, would lead one to long to escape from the trial, the pressure, the difficulty; but this would never do. We must pass from grade to grade in the school; but the Master accompanies us, and the light of His countenance, and the tender sympathy of His heart, sustain us under the most trying circumstances.

A Clear Confession

"Whose I am," says Paul, right in the teeth of the heathen sailors, right in the teeth of the stoical, skeptical centurion, right in the teeth of all men - I belong to God - Paul takes pride in that.

You notice that the very first word in his epistle to the Romans, after his own name, is "doulos" - "Paul, doulos," (slave); he glories in it.

The Romans fastened a little slip of brass on the ankle of the slave, and on his wrist; and on the slip of brass on the wrist was the name of the owner, and the word "slave" with it; and in the forum or in the market place, the slave with the glitter of that slip of brass, had to step aside, and the proud, haughty Roman drew in his toga as the slave went by: My slave, keep to thine own side of the pavement, please!

Ah, but Paul took a pride in the glitter of that piece of brass; it was his cherished honor. Paul prided himself, boasted himself, in being the slave of the Master. Do you?

Some of you take down the sleeve of your coat like this, and you say, "Now, thou little bracelet of slavery, I gave myself to the Lord last night; very well, but just be hidden for a little; for I cannot just show to all the fellows at present this little slip of brass; I know that I belong to the Lord, but I'll just put my cuff over thee, please."

Ah! that wretched cowardice! Why don't you bare your arm and say right out, "I belong to Christ; look at it - look at the slip of brass, dearer and better to me than a crown of diamonds or a scepter of gold." You belong to Christ, then glory in it.

"Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." Matt. 10:32, 33.

The Color of Our Hope

It has been said that men are known by the ends they are pursuing. If this is so, our conduct in the present life will have the impress and bearing of that futurity we are expecting. Our life here will be colored by the foretaste of a life there. 'Those whose ambition is dignity and power, those who dream only of riches, those who have no other aim than the pleasures of this world, act according to that which is in their hearts; their habits bear the mark of what they long for. So it is with us; if the faithful understood their calling, which is no less than participation in a coming heavenly glory, what would be the consequence? Nothing less than viewing themselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They would judge the spirit of the age, and would preserve their hearts from being engrossed by human objects, and from many a care and distraction hurtful to the life of a Christian. They would exercise a happy dependence upon Him who has ordered all things, and who knows the end from the beginning, and would yield themselves entirely to that hope which has been given them, and to the discharge of those duties which flow from it. Our passions instead of being unduly perturbed and anxious, let loose in a world of politics, would be quieted as we observe what God has said. We should be tranquil. Living practically separated from the world, we can study beforehand the profound and perfect wisdom of God.

Consider One Another

It is essential to family peace, harmony, and comfort that all members should "consider one another." We are responsible to seek the good and happiness of those around us, and not our own. If all would but remember this, what different households we would have, and what a different tale would families have to tell! Every Christian household should be a reflection of the divine character. The atmosphere should just be the very atmosphere of heaven. How is this to be? Simply by each one seeking to walk in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus and manifesting His spirit. He did always those things that pleased His Father.

C.H.M.

Oh, happy home where each one serves

Thee lowly, Whatever His appointed work may be,

Till every common task seems great and holy,

When it is done, O Lord, as unto Thee.

Consider the Lilies

The monkishness that would condemn everything is not the denial of sin but the denial of nature. God never denies it because He made it. In His own blessed grace, in all the ruin sin has wrought, the Lord can take notice of His own works: "Consider the lilies" (Matt. 6:28). He saw all that was of God, while so practically with God, and entirely above the evil, that He saw all that was of man and judged it.

In spirit up there I can look down and see what is of God's hand in the creation itself. When I get out of it I can look at it; Christ being out of it completely could look at a lily and call attention to its beauty, judging all that was morally corrupt. Where anything had the stamp of God He could admire it; and it is only by judging evil that one can do this.

I look for a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no evil; but because of being brought into a place in Christ superior to the evil, I can look at all that is of God in this world.

If natural affections get too strong and hold the objects of them, they become idols; but to be without them is one of the signs of the last days.

My safety is to get so completely with God as to be able to let my affections flow out more and more to Christians. God has set His seal to all He created, and evil came in. God, having judged it by the cross, lifts us above it.

Counsel to Young Christians

Cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. Depend on Him. Some are allowed a long season of joy on first believing. But God knows our hearts, and how soon we begin to depend on our joy, and not on Christ. He is our Object - not the joy. Sin no longer remains on you, but the flesh is in you to the end; the old stock will put forth its buds which must be nipped off as they appear. No fruit can come of it. It is the new nature that bears fruit to God. But though the flesh is in you, do not be thinking of this, but think of Christ. As you grow in the knowledge of Christ, a joy comes, deeper than the first joy. The water rushing down a hill is beautiful to look at, and makes most noise; but you will find the water in the plain deeper, calmer, more fit for general use.

Cleave to Christ with purpose of heart. A distracted heart is the bane of Christians. When we have got something that is not Christ, we are away from the source of strength. When my soul is filled with Christ, I have no heart or eye for the trash of this world. If Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith, it will not be a question with you, "What harm is there in this or that?" but rather, "Am I doing this for Christ?" "Can Christ go along with me in this'?" Do not let the world come in and distract your thoughts. I speak especially to you who are young. They who are older have had more experience in it, and know more what it is worth; but it all lies shining before you. Its smiles are deceitful-still it smiles. It makes promises which it cannot keep; still it makes them. Your hearts are too big for the world; it cannot fill them. They are too little for Christ; He fills heaven; He will fill you to overflowing.

You will have indeed to learn what is in your own heart. Abide with God and you will learn it with Him, and with His grace. If you do not, you will have with bitter sorrow to learn it with the devil, through his successful temptation. But God is faithful. If you have been getting away from Him, and other things have come in and formed a crust, as it were, over your hearts, you will not at once get back the joy. God will have you deal with this crust and get rid of it. Remember Christ bought you with His own blood, that you should be His, not the world's. Do not let Satan get between you and God's grace. However careless you may have been, however far you may have gotten away from Him, count on His love. It is His joy to see you back again. Look at the sin with horror, but never wrong Him by distrusting His love. Talk much with Jesus. Never be content without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a dear friend. Be not satisfied with anything short of close intercourse of soul with Him who has loved you and washed you from your sins in His own blood.

The Danger of Compromise

The unbelieving world can no longer see Christ, but it does see those who bear His name - Christians. What does the world see when it looks at us? Does it see Christ in us, or do we fail in our testimony for Him because of compromise in our personal lives? As Christians we are called to wholly follow the Lord - not with our lips alone, but with our whole being. Christ has called us to be His own without reservation, but when we compromise with Satan we find ourselves treading on very dangerous ground.

There are many ways in which we may be tempted to compromise with this enemy of Christ and of our souls. When Moses demanded of Pharaoh the liberation of the children of Israel, they were longing for freedom from slavery. Pharaoh's offers of compromise were typical of the way Satan seeks today to keep Christians in bondage to the world.

To Israel, Pharaoh said, "Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land" (Exod. 8:25). How similar is the advice we are given today: Don't be a fanatic - be in the world and of the world, for that is where the action is - don't try to be different; you must stay close to people to be of any real help to them.

It is also suggested that by staying "in the land," we shall find it much easier to be Christians. But this is a falsehood.

The Apostle Paul knew the danger of compromise with the world, and exhorted us, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Rom. 12:2.

Pharaoh's second offer of compromise has its counterpart today also. "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away" (Exod. 8:28). While God was insisting upon a clean break from Egypt, Pharaoh wanted the people to stay close. If he could keep them near, he could still exercise authority over them and force them to return; thus the testimony would have been nullified more effectively than if they had never left Egypt at all. More serious injury to the cause of Christ has been done by persons who once seemed to have given up the world, and then returned to it, than if they had never made Christian profession. Their attitude demonstrates that, having "tasted of the heavenly gift," they have no appetite for it and "fall away... crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh" (Heb. 6:4-6).

It is striking too how Egypt typified for Israel that which we see in today's world order. There the people were slaves, even as the unbelieving are slaves today.

How subtle the urge to compromise with Satan! And how disastrous! All around us are men and women who are lost because they have already made the wrong choice; they will not believe. "But if also our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in those that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them." 2 Cor. 4:3, 4; J.N.D. Trans.

It would seem that the spirit of compromise is working havoc among Christians. May each one of us who has received Christ as our personal Savior seek grace, purpose of heart, and strength to stand against the rising tide of compromise. Let us bear in mind, that when we yield, it is not just ourselves that we discredit; we are dishonoring the One whose name we bear, who gave up everything that He might have us for Himself. May His love so constrain us that we no longer live to ourselves, but to Him who died for us, and rose again.

Discerning the Lord's Mind

As to discerning the Lord's mind, it is largely a question of the state of soul. "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him" (Psalm 25:14). Is the eye single? Do I desire only His will? Am I not blinded through self-interest or self-will in some way? Do I refer all to the Lord, and wait on Him, to know His will? If so, He will guide. We do not expect any revelation, or anything extraordinary, but He, by laying on the mind what is pleasing to Him, or by some providential way, will indicate His will. This may be so distinct that it virtually amounts to a certainty in the mind, though we may not be able to prove it to another. The great thing is nearness to the Lord, and a subject mind, with the desire, "Show me Thy way." He sets before us an open door, with something to indicate that we may enter. We see His hand in it, recognize it, and act accordingly.

This is something we have to learn experimentally. It is not easy to teach it to another, because it is not a mere mental or intellectual operation. Some years ago I passed through a great exercise of soul as to how I could know the Lord's will to go here or go there. I spoke of it to J.N.D. once when I met him at Alton, Illinois. The answer I got was, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him." I never forgot it. And I have found since that when I could get no light, there was some cause - something in my state - or something that hindered full communion. Often there has been more or less misgiving as to whether I had His mind; but generally I have found that when any step was taken in His fear, sooner or later it became manifest that He had guided. Sometimes it is "bit and bridle" - some restraint - some hindrance - but this is where mere nature is working, or will, and the eye is not clear. And it is a mercy to be restrained rather than to have our own way. The simple, normal thing is,, "I will guide thee with Mine eye." Psa. 32.

God's Word gives us the great principles. God's Spirit forms our hearts in these principles; and the little details fall into line with them. We exercise our judgment, but it is the judgment of a "sound mind"; that is, a mind formed in its workings by the Word of God. Then "I have set the LORD always before Me". This Object forms and governs the motives. It is akin to "the fear of the LORD." He gets His rightful place in the soul, and He forms our thoughts and desires, and we act for Him.

The First Years of Christianity: Rebecca

If we turn to this inspired account, we notice that Isaac had no bride until after that remarkable event in his history, his being offered up on the altar, and his being received in figure from the dead. It is written of Abraham, after he had offered up his only begotten son, that he accounted that “God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb. 11:19). Until this event, until in figure Isaac was raised from the dead, we do not hear of the bride of Isaac. This in our illustration then is the foundation of all that follows. “God will provide Himself a lamb.”

Was not this so in the great antitype? When God gave up His only begotten Son to the actual death of the cross, and until that work was finished on the cross, and God had raised up His Son from the dead—until that we have not one word of the Church, the bride of Christ, as an existing thing. So far then the illustration is in keeping with the New Testament account of the formation of the Church.

Then, in the account of Genesis, it is after the receiving of Isaac from the dead, that Sarah dies and is buried. It was after the death and resurrection of Jesus that the Jews were set aside, and for a time buried among the nations.

But still more striking is the fact, that after the death and resurrection of Isaac, the father, Abraham, and the risen son, Isaac, send the third person, the steward of the household, from Canaan (figure of heaven) for the specific purpose of fetching the bride, Rebecca, for Isaac the son. Could anything be more striking as a figure? It was after Jesus, the heavenly Bridegroom, had died, and was risen from the dead, and had ascended up to heaven, that the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to this world—the Jews having rejected the Savior-Messiah, and all the promises to Israel for a time being set aside, buried, as it were, for the present. Oh, that this were understood! The specific object of the descent of the Holy Spirit, as we shall see when we come to the Acts and epistles, was to form the bride, and take her to meet the Bridegroom. Let us look at this picture.

Eliezer then is a figure of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven. He comes, sent of the father, Abraham, for a bride for Isaac. He does not come for all Mesopotamia. And at this time Jesus does not ask for the whole world, but for those whom the Father has given Him, and who will compose the bride.

Mark, he comes in pure grace, giving freely his gifts, but giving first to the bride. Like Jesus at the well, he desires a drink of water from this stranger. For the Holy Spirit, as the Shepherd, also has joy in finding the lost one (Luke 15). But He brings all to her—the jewel for the forehead, and the bracelets for the hands. And not as the world, He gives all first. Such is the way of the Holy Spirit in taking of the things that are Christ's. It is the righteousness of God unto all, and the jewel upon the forehead of every one that believes; and where the righteousness of God is on the forehead. everlasting love clasps the hands. This free favor touches the heart of Rebecca. There is room

enough for the camels to lodge in.

It is free favor, everlasting love, that opens the heart to Christ; and the Spirit then dwells there forever. The heart is won for Christ. Mark, this second type brings out the work of the Spirit in fetching the bride. Precious lessons for every servant of Christ. It is ours to seek this divine guidance, and when we have found it, to bow and worship. And now he brings out “Jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah; he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.” Yes, the gospel sent by the Holy Spirit is giving. Every other gospel is asking something from man, who finds he has nothing to give.

Which gospel do you hear? Giving in pure, free favor, like our picture here, or asking like the law, and giving nothing? But thus the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ for the bride. The precious realities of redemption are figured by jewels of silver, and divine righteousness by the figure of gold. All is from the risen Son, the heavenly Bridegroom. But when thus clothed, and made meet to be the bride of Isaac, is there nothing more? no question of responsibility for the bride? Yes, there is the question of all questions: “Wilt thou go?” Have we heard that question? The Holy Spirit will never ask you that question until He has shown you and given you all that makes you perfectly meet to be the bride of Christ. Ah, then your heart longs to be gone. Yes, she said, “I will go.” “And the servant took Rebekah and went his way.” Yes, she is gone from all she held dear in that land of idolators. SHE IS GONE to meet the bridegroom. She sits on the camel with her back on her former home, and her face toward the bridegroom and her future home. Which way do you sit, my reader? Is your back on all you once held dear in a sinful world? Is your face toward your waiting Bridegroom and your eternal home above? The true attitude of the Church is to go out to meet Him she loves. This was her first love. Yes, she turned her back on all below, to meet him she loved. The journey was long, in dependence at every step, on the guide who came to fetch her.

But the next event, after she left her old home, was, “Isaac came,” “and Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming.” And to this agree the words of Jesus, “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.” Yes, as Isaac came out in the fields of Canaan to meditate, so Jesus is now meditating in the fields of glory. Oh, that the bride may now lift up her eyes to see Him, as Rebecca lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac. May we, like her, dwell on all the Spirit has to tell us of the Man that comes out to meet us. Oh, yes, it is His delight to tell us more and more of the Man that comes out to meet us. “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

Yes, as the call of Rebecca brings before us the work of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, to form and fetch the bride to meet and be forever with the Lord, this lovely picture will enable us to detect all that counterfeits His blessed work.

Let us try it. Here comes a very large company, led by a wonderful person. You will find his name and character in 2 Corinthians 11:14, and his company in verse 15. But how is this? They are all going the wrong way. They all have their backs on the coming of the Lord. They all say in their hearts, “My lord delayeth his coming.” They are full of hatred to Rebecca, and would like to smite

her. They say, We are the church, and all that do not belong to us are damned, or shall be, both in this world and the next, so soon as we have power.

Well, they seem very much in earnest; they seem to have an object before them. If it is not Christ coming from heaven to meet them, what is it? Ah, if you could but get it out of them, you would not forget it.

Ask one or two. Well, try this one—the Reverend So-and-so. Kindly excuse me, do you not profess to be a Christian, and this company with you, does it not bear the name of being “the church,” the bride of Christ? “Yes, quite so. And we are the only church; all others are heretics, and will be lost forever.” This is strange. Did not the Church of Christ in the beginning go out to meet Him? And you are going the wrong way, with your backs to the coming of the Lord, and your faces on what?

How many would say, if they spoke up, “I have no time to think about such things as the coming of the Lord; I am seeking a good living in the world. We want possession of all Mesopotamia, and divide it into parishes for priests.”

And here comes another. He might say, “I am not so foolish as to give up the world. I delight in the theater and all the dancing and carousing of Mesopotamia.” Poor things! When they think of eternity, they need a good amount of what they call pleasure to make up for the awful despair of eternity.

To another, the one like an angel of light is whispering, “What, give up Mesopotamia, my beautiful world? (2 Cor. 4:4). Come and join me in politics, and let your hope be the improvement of Mesopotamia.”

Far more than this is true of that company who assume to be the only church on earth, but alas, they are traveling the wrong way. But what a test for the writer, and every reader of these lines! Are we being led by Satan, or by the Holy Spirit? Is the world your object, or mine? Or is the object of our hearts the Bridegroom of the Church? Have we received the free grace gifts of the Holy Spirit? Christ our redemption; Christ our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, our all? Have we been won to Christ? Have we said, “I will go”? What have we gone out from, to meet the Lord? Is He, the coming One, the Object of our hearts?

Before we look at our third picture, let us meditate on this question: Which way are we traveling? If not to meet the Lord, our name is not Rebecca. In this picture then we see that the purpose of the Father, and the work of the Holy Spirit during this time, is to gather and present the bride to the risen Son. This alone is the present work of the Spirit.

The First Years of Christianity: Ruth

We have looked at the creation of Eve as illustrating the purpose and work of God in the new creation of the Church, the bride of Christ.

We have also seen the work of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven to form the Church, the bride of Christ, in the call of Rebecca.

Now we would behold the Bridegroom-Redeemer in the book of Ruth — the attractions of Christ, and the way the desolate stranger is drawn to Him and becomes the redeemed bride.

We get also the exercises of heart through which each soul passes, more or less, that is brought to Christ. Just as each, whether Jew or Gentile, is found dead in sins, children of wrath in Ephesians 2 — yes, each of those raised up with Christ to occupy the place of highest blessing in Him in the heavenlies — so it is in our picture. Ruth is one of a people outside, under the curse according to the law (see Deut. 23:3-6), just as in Ephesians 2:12, “Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”

Such is our condition by nature. Such was the position of Ruth, the Moabitess. And death was written upon her. All hope was gone as to her husband; he was dead, and his brother was dead; Elimelech their father also was dead. This is the place where grace finds her. For from first to last “by grace are ye saved.” God can use whom He pleases in that work of grace.

She who was “Naomi” (pleasing) in the land of Jehovah, has become “Mara” (bitter) when away from her God, and is stirred, for she hears of blessing when in the land of Moab far away “how that the LORD had visited His people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her.” Thus the work of grace begins apparently in both Ruth and Orpah. And so it is, often the work seems to begin in two persons, and they travel on together for a time. And there is the same outward love for a time to the feeble messenger of that grace. Thus it was with Orpah as well as Ruth. Orpah wept and kissed Naomi, and then went back to her demon gods. “I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [demons], and not to God” (1 Cor. 10:20).

How many Orpahs have we known, who once professed to have left the world, and started for the heavenly journey? Such have sacrificed themselves and their children to the worship of fashion and pleasure. Not so where there is a real work of grace: “Ruth came unto her.” She says, “Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” There must be uncompromising decision for Christ.

Nothing could more strikingly illustrate the soul's first meeting with Christ than Ruth 2. She gleaned in the field of the bridegroom, the kinsman-redeemer. What grace he shows her! She is welcome when thirsty to drink, and at meal times to come and eat; and handfuls are dropped on purpose for her. Still she was only a gleaner. Many remain in the fields of our Boaz, happy to get blessing, and

sharing those blessings with others, as Ruth did with Naomi, and never seem to reach the true ground of rest. "Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" said Naomi to Ruth.

We notice that the only way to find rest is to seek it at the feet of the Redeemer-kinsman, as seen in chapter 3. We must know Him as the Redeemer-Bridegroom, just as Ruth took that place at the feet of Boaz in his sleep, picture of the death of Christ. Spread thy sheltering protection over me, for thou art one that hath right to redeem. There was another relation before Boaz, and Ruth had to wait until the morning. Yes, we must be brought to the death, of the cross of Christ. But mark it is not there we find rest, the rest of redemption. If the morning of the resurrection of Christ had never broken the silence of the tomb, we could never have found eternal rest. He must rise again, or there can be no redeemed bride. We must call attention to this point in this beautiful illustration. The Church as such had no actual existence until Jesus arose from the dead. Ruth has not to glean now, but to sit still, "for the man will not be at rest, until he have finished the thing this day."

Ruth 4 is the question, Who is to be your husband and redeemer? Man, as represented in Israel, was placed under law, as the old husband. That relationship existed. The question then was, Could the law bring man into resurrection redemption? It could not. It could go no further than the land; that is, the government of God in this world. It could not redeem the guilty. The first kinsman could not redeem Ruth, one of the accursed race, and give her a place in resurrection. Very strikingly is all this brought out in this chapter. He must relinquish all claim and pretension. "So he drew off his shoe." What he could not do, Boaz did; he says, "Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance."

In like manner, what the law could not do, Christ has done; as it is written, "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," etc. Oh, what love was this — the eternal Son, the Creator of all things, to humble Himself so low as to become the Redeemer-kinsman of poor lost sinners under the curse of sin, to pay the purchase of their redemption; and, as risen from the dead, to take them into everlasting oneness with Himself as His body and His bride.

Very briefly let us now see how all these pictures or types of the Church have been fulfilled in the Church, the bride of Christ. In Ephesians we see the Church as the workmanship of God, according to His own purpose, which answered to the creation of Eve. God raised Christ from the dead. The new creation of the Church was consequent on His death and resurrection. The Church is to be presented to Christ, the last Adam, and be joint heir with Him over all things in the paradise of God in the heavenlies.

Then after the death and resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven to form the Church. This work of the Spirit is going on still, and will go on until that moment when the Church complete is presented to Christ, as Rebecca was to Isaac. The day of Pentecost was the first day of the work of the Holy Spirit in forming the Church, and soon the last will have arrived. See the Acts for the full account of the formation of the Church. And though the Satanic counterfeit goes on to Babylon's apostasy, yet the work, guidance, and care of the Holy Spirit never ceases; and daily now, as at the beginning, such as are saved are added to the Lord, as truly as on the day of Pentecost. And as the Church or assembly included all who were saved then, so now it is quite

true there is no salvation outside the pale. of the true Church, simply for this good reason, that all that are truly saved are baptized into the one body, the Church. "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). The Holy Spirit never makes or baptizes different bodies of Christians. For it is as true that there is but one body, as it is that there is one Spirit. Christ is the Head of His body the Church. "There is one body" (Eph. 4:4-6). The Lord grant that we may hold this important truth firm to the end. For whatever is not truth is not of God, but of the father of lies.

There was one Eve, one Rebecca, one Ruth. In each figure, is only one. One bridegroom, Boaz; one redeemed bride, Ruth. There were different local assemblies, but only the one assembly, the body of Christ. All believers formed that one assembly. All believers now form the one Church or assembly of God. That one assembly is about to be caught up to meet the Lord, and to be forever with Him; and all the varied imitations of men or Satan will be left behind. The blessed hope of the Church may be seen in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, and the judgments that will follow, in chapter 5:2-3: "and they shall not escape." "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:7-8).

How terrible the judgments about to be poured on apostate Christendom as revealed to us in Revelation 17 and 18. Then, when the great harlot is forever judged, the bride of the Lamb will be the true second Eve, the Rebecca, the Ruth. Then will be heard the voice of the great multitude in heaven, saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:7-8). Read also the description given of her in Revelation 21:9 to end. "Having the glory of God: and her light [or shining] was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Such is the sure destiny of the Church of God, them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling. The Church of God is composed only of such. All pretensions as to being the true Church will soon be tested. May every reader of these few lines be tested NOW. Rest not, beloved reader, until you are quite sure you belong to the redeemed Church of God— until you know that you have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins. Tomorrow may be too late; the Church may be gone to be forever with the Lord, and you, if unsaved, forever left, shut out. Oh, think of those words, "Too late!" What infinite mercy that it is not too late yet. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Oh, the precious grace that invites you so sweetly, even unto the last moment. Have you tried the pleasures of this world, its sins, fashions, and its follies — and still you thirst? Oh, come to Jesus; come now. He says, "And let him that is athirst come." Do not say, I am too bad for such scenes of glory and holiness. No, He says, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." He is the truth; He will not deceive you. Oh, come. And to you who have come, can you look up to Jesus in the heavens and say, Come? Who can say that He will not come the day you read these words?

For Nervous Prostration

Some years ago, a lady who tells the story herself, went to consult a famous physician about her health. She was a woman of nervous temperament, whose troubles-and she had many-had worried and excited her to such a pitch, that the strain threatened her physical strength, and even her reason. She gave the doctor a list of her symptoms, and answered the questions, only to be astonished at this brief prescription at the end: "Madam, what you need is to read your Bible more."

"But doctor!" began the bewildered patient,

"Go home and read your Bible an hour a day," the great man reiterated with kindly authority. "Then come back to me a month from today." And he bowed her out, without a possibility of further protest.

At first his patient was inclined to be angry. Then she reflected that, at least, the prescription was not an expensive one. Besides, it certainly had been a long time since she had read the Bible regularly, she reflected, with a pang of conscience. Worldly cares had crowded out prayer and Bible study for years; and, though she would have resented being called an irreligious woman, she had undoubtedly become a most careless Christian. She went home and set herself conscientiously to try the physician's remedy.

In one month she went back to his office. "Well," he said, smiling as he looked at her face, "I see you are an obedient patient, and have taken my prescription faithfully. Do you feel as if you need any other medicine now?"

"No, doctor, I don't," she said honestly. "I feel like a different person. But how did you know that was just what I needed?"

For answer, the famous physician turned to his desk. There, worn and marked, lay an open Bible.

"Madam," he said, with deep earnestness, "if I were to omit my daily reading of this Book, I should lose my greatest source of strength and skill. I never go to an operation without reading my Bible. I never attend a distressing case without finding help in its pages. Your case called not for medicine, but for sources of peace, and strength, and comfort outside your own mind; and I showed you my own prescription, and I knew it would cure."

"Yet I confess, doctor," said his patient, "that I came very near not taking it."

"Very few are willing to try it, I find," said the physician, smiling again. "But there are many, many cases in my practice, where it would work wonders if they only would take it."

The doctor died some years ago, but his prescription still remains.

It is true that "earth hath no sorrow that heaven cannot heal." Only, we have to get in touch with heaven for the healing. That "touch" is not infrequently gotten through the pages of God's Word.

There we find both comfort and cure. "Attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings,... for they are life unto those that find them, and health [medicine, margin] to all their flesh." Prov. 4:20-22.

It comforts us to know that He always has some high and holy PURPOSE in all our pressure and our pain. Into all the details of His plans and purposes concerning us, we are not permitted to enter. We are, however, privileged to know that the path by which He leads us, ever is for our perfection and His praise.

"The thought that comforts more than all,

And keeps my heart at rest,

Is this: that nothing comes to me,

But what My Lord sees best."

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." Rom. 8:28.

"He performeth the thing that is appointed for me" (Job 23:14). All His "permissions" and His "performings" are but parts of His divine process, for the attainment of His purpose in conforming us to "the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29).

What a blessed consummation! Is it not worth any cost? Surely it comforts us to know that, though the furnace fires through which we pass are fierce, they are refining us. When the divine work is done, when the "dross" and "tin" (Isa. 1:25) have been purged away, we shall be "like Him." In that day we shall have "beauty for ashes" (Isa. 61:3).

Nor is that all. For even here and now He has in view for us "some better thing," through all our trials and our tears. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation [distress], that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." 2 Cor. 1:3, 4.

This is His purpose. This is our privilege. How could it possibly be ours but by the process which He takes?

So, we are comforted! And so He fits us, and finds in us His channels to convey to the disconsolate, the distressed, and the "cast down" hearts of men, "The God of all comfort" Himself (2 Cor. 1:3), and the Christ who "comfort[s] all that mourn" (Isa. 61:2).

Surely we shall welcome-at least we shall not shrink from-"the cross," or trial, that brings to ourselves this real experience of the Comforter and His blessings, and makes Him real to others through us.

"I will not, I dare not to falter;

And He who is wise and true

Has promised Himself to be with me,

Until I am safely through.

"Passed through to the light and the gladness,

Passed through to a radiance rare;

Passed through all my own selfish sadness,

The sadness of others to share."

Then too we are comforted by His promises-His "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Pet. 1:4). We are comforted by all of them, but by His last one most of all. "Surely I come quickly!" (Rev. 22:20). "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. 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." John 14:13. This is the consoling prospect-the "blessed hope"-of every blood-bought child of God, and it may be realized today.

Think what it means! More certain than the coming of another day, for us, is the coming of "the bridegroom" of our souls. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [go before] them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thess. 4:14-18.

Then earth for us, with all its troubles and its tears, its sin and sorrow, its sickness and its pain, will be forever past. Then "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51, 52).

Then -

"No toiling yonder, and no weariness,

No disappointments and no more distress;

The future bright, the past all understood,

We'll see that all the way He led was good.

"No parting yonder, and no sad goodbyes,

No pain, no sickness, and no weeping eyes;

But, best of all, my Savior I shall see,

No cloud will come between my Lord and me."

Yes, "we shall see Him," for whom, beyond all others, we have longed. And "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

Surely then, with such wealth of comfort from and about the past-in the present, and for the future-freely, fully, and for all who need-we cannot but say:

"This hath He done, and shall we not adore Him? This shall He do, and can we still despair? Come, let us quickly fling ourselves before Him, Cast at His feet the burden of our care."

"There is a balm for every pain,

A medicine for all sorrow,

The eye turned backward to the cross,

And forward to the morrow.

The morrow of the glory and the psalm

When He shall come;

The morrow of the reaping and the palm,

The welcome home.

Meantime, in His beloved hands our ways,

And on His heart the wandering heart at rest,

AND COMFORT for the weary one who lays

His head upon His breast."

"I, even I, am He that comforteth you" (Isa. 51:12).

The Giver

A person whom an emperor was about to bestow a valuable present, declined the gift on the ground that it was too costly for his acceptance. "But not too costly for an emperor to give," was the reply. None of us are really worthy of the gifts of God - especially of His one "Unspeakable Gift." Blessedly, they are not bestowed according to our merit, but rather by His ability to give. And it pleases God to accept meager thanks as their full acknowledgment.

God's King: Messianic Psalms

Chapter 8-Psalm 72

In the song of loves or delight, as Psalm 45 is called, we have a description of the Lord's personal appearance on His return from heaven. In a Psalm for Solomon (72), which completes the prayers of David the son of Jesse, we learn the character of Messiah's reign—a subject of immense importance for the earthly people who will enjoy the favor of His personal rule. In Psalm 71 we are made acquainted with their wishes, and in Psalm 72 we are taught how God will respond to them. Some of their circumstances, similar in measure to those through which the Lord Jesus has passed, are recounted in Psalm 71, of which verses 13 are very similar to the first three verses of Psalm 31; verses 5 and 6, 10 and 11, and 12 correspond very closely to the utterances of the Lord Himself in Psalm 22:9 and 10, 8, 19, and verse 13 to the words of Psalm 40:14. Their wish to be preserved in old age, preferred in Psalm 71:9-18, will be granted most fully, as Psalm 72:14 assures us. A new era then will have dawned upon the earth on which night has as yet only reigned, though we can now say, The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. (Rom. 13:12.)

Casting our eyes over this Psalm, we must own that a revolution will have taken place when that of which it speaks shall be fulfilled—a revolution like none that men have witnessed, a revolution such as the world most dreads, for judgment will have returned unto righteousness, and the reign of the true Solomon will indeed have commenced. God's people, God's poor, so long the object of men's contempt and hatred, will be the special subjects of the King's supervision and care. The poor and the needy, who have had so often to turn from judges and rulers on earth to invoke the aid and justice of the Almighty, will learn that the King in Zion will administer justice for them, and deal with them in righteousness. The helpless will find they have a judge to maintain their cause, and the once friendless will be so no longer.

When David penned these words this halcyon time had not arrived. Of his own day therefore the Psalm does not speak. David was the king and while he lived, what he described could not be enjoyed, for his Son must be the King, actually seated on the throne and exercising the sovereignty which none but the monarch himself has authority to wield. No delegate deriving authority from the monarch, too old perhaps himself to discharge the duties of his office, could answer to the description here given, nor could David and Solomon together have fulfilled what the royal prophet has sketched out.

One person, not two, is here before us as invested with supreme command; and to fix the readers' eyes on the One whose rule is depicted, the limits of His kingdom are stated in verse 8, the boundaries first mentioned by God when He made a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:18), and confirmed by Him when Israel entered into a covenant with Him at Sinai (Exod. 23:31). Again mentioned after the wilderness journey was over (Josh. 1:4), for no failure on Israel's part could annul God's unconditional covenant with Abraham, the whole land was, however, never subdued till the reign of David, and two only of the kings who have reigned at Jerusalem could affirm that this Psalm states the limits of their dominions; namely, David and Solomon. If then the Psalm has

been fulfilled, Solomon is the only one to whom it could apply, for he was the king's son, and he reigned, as 1 Kings 4:21 states, from the Euphrates to the southern extremity of Canaan. But he died, whereas of this King it is stated, "He shall live" (v. 15); for death will not cut short His days, or ever terminate His reign.

Bright indeed was the commencement of Solomon's reign, and his name became ever after a synonym for those gifted with more than ordinary intelligence and acquired knowledge; but its end was very different. He began full of promise, like the dawn of a summer's day, with nothing on the horizon to portend the approach of the least cloud to dim the brightness of the sun; but, ere he breathed his last, lowering clouds, ominous of a coming storm, announced the breakup as near at hand of that empire which David, under God, had formed, and Solomon had enjoyed.

Of whom then does this Psalm speak? No writer in the New Testament has quoted from it to cast the light of a fuller revelation on the words of the Holy Spirit by David. But, if we cannot turn to the New Testament for help, we can appeal to the Old, and there find confirmation of the thought; the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, is the One whose reign is here so beautifully described. To Abraham God had said, just after the offering up of Isaac, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Gen. 22:18. From Gal. 3:16 we learn who the seed was, of whom the angel of Jehovah, who called to Abraham out of heaven, really spoke- "thy seed, which is Christ." To this promise our Psalm refers in the words, "men shall be blessed in Him" (v. 17); the Holy Spirit, by David, taking up that record, applies it directly to Messiah, which Paul, centuries after, was permitted to explain.

To the patriarch God had spoken of a seed; in this Psalm God speaks of a Person, the king's Son, whom the Holy Spirit in Galatians directly affirms to be the once humbled and crucified, but now risen and glorified, One- the Lord Jesus Christ. As David then, referring thus to Genesis, connects the subject of his theme with the seed of Abraham, to whom the promise was given, Zechariah, another prophet, writing long after David's throne had been overturned, applies what is stated in verse 8 of our Psalm to the Lord Jesus as Jerusalem's King. One sovereign, it is true, then reigned over all the country between the Euphrates and the river of Egypt; but, whereas David and Solomon had their throne at Jerusalem, and could speak of their kingdom as on this side of the Euphrates, the king of Zechariah's day spoke of this same country as beyond the river to him, reversing the condition of things as they existed in David's time.

God's word, however, cannot be broken; so His unconditional covenant with Abraham will not be abrogated, as the son of Iddo reminds the returned remnant, retracing the boundaries of Messiah's kingdom, and showing that by not one inch of ground, of which God spoke to Abraham, shall its area be diminished (Zech. 9:10). So, though this Psalm is never quoted in the New Testament, the reference in it to Gen. 22:18, and the quotation from it in Zech. 9:10, make it very clear about whom it was written. And since the Lord, though He has entered Jerusalem on the ass's colt as the King, has not yet occupied the throne in the manner here predicted, it is manifest that we have from the pen of David the Holy Spirit's description of events still future.

The question being settled as to whom the Psalm refers, let us now turn for a little to examine of what it speaks. God's judgments and God's righteousness having been requested for the king's son, what will follow, on their being granted, form the subject of this inspired composition. As a young monarch, Solomon had asked of God something similar to these petitions (1 Kings 3:9), "and the speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing"; and riches, and wealth,

and honor were also granted to him. How suited was his prayer, David's prayer for the king's son illustrates, while proving that though entitled, "For Solomon," it looked on to One beyond him. For Solomon did not plead for the fulfillment of David's request on his behalf, but asked, as we read, for himself for wisdom and intelligence, conscious of what he needed to govern God's people aright. For it was not a limited monarchy which David established, and Solomon inherited, but a monarchy absolute in its character, and in which all depended upon the king who sat on the throne executing judgment and justice for all Israel. David and Solomon being monarchs of this class, it is clear that He too must be absolute as King when He reigns on earth, who can now sit on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. When He reigns all will depend on Him, as of old when the kings of Judah were faithful, the kingdom prospered; and hence we can understand why all David's desires centered in God's gifts to the King, who, receiving God's judgments and God's righteousness, will act as God acts, and peace and order will be the result—peace, not the effect of compromise with evil, but peace in righteousness, so little known, though surely often desired.

Righteousness and judgment thus administered, the salvation of the needy and the destruction of the oppressors will attest to all the new character of the rule established by divine power in Zion, which, so different from what history can speak of, will tend to make men fear God throughout all generations (v. 5). Observe that this is the first effect of His reign, as stated in the Psalm. When this righteous rule is established, God will be feared as long as the sun and moon endure—a condition of things never known before. Then follow the beneficent results of His rule, and the place on earth which powers and authorities will accord to Him—God first, Himself next, for here, as man, the king's son, does He take His place and reign.

Refreshing like the rain to the mown grass will His presence prove, a simile all can understand, reviving and reinvigorating what will have appeared as burned up and withered; for Israel's hopes, which may have seemed vain, will then be fulfilled to the uttermost, His presence introducing and insuring their blessing to all generations. To give them rain is the Lord's prerogative, a standing witness in all ages that He alone is the Creator and true God (Jer. 14:22). Then too will it be proved that He alone can make that descend upon men, which answers to the softening, reviving showers in the world of nature; added to this, the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

Every step that we take in this Psalm only brings out in bright relief the contrast of that day to all that has been before it; and greater surely will the contrast appear to those who will have passed through the time of Jacob's trouble just previous to the Lord's millennial reign, having experienced the misery of being under godless power, unchecked for a while in its career of lawlessness and opposition to all that is of God. Then peace, that blessing of which men have often promised themselves a continuance, but always have found that they could not ensure its permanence, will at last be established on this earth, to abide while times and seasons shall run their appointed course.

The King viewed here as Messiah, the limits of His kingdom are announced, whom all kings will serve, made God's Firstborn higher than the kings of the earth (Psalm 89:27); and those nomad, lawless tribes, whom no government has yet tamed, inheriting the temper and disposition of their ancestor, Ishmael, will yield to Him obeisance, while His enemies will lick the dust. What problems in government will then be solved, but only by Him who is God's King. The unruly and turbulent

who now so often baffle the best intentioned monarchs, will find in Him a ruler whose will must be obeyed; and again in the history of Israel will it be recorded that to the One reigning at Jerusalem tribute and homage must be paid by the kings of the earth, all acknowledging His superiority, who will deliver the "needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."

Let us stop here for a moment, and survey the scene presented to us. Satan will have attempted to establish a supreme power, to whom kings will give allegiance, while the nations under their rule will wonder at its might. But after all, Satan's masterpiece, his last great effort before he shall be bound in the bottomless pit, will have results transient only in duration, and limited in extent. The boundaries of the Roman earth will mark the extent of that supremacy, which a power outside it (the King of the North) will refuse to admit. Here, however, all kings shall fall down before the king's Son; all nations shall serve Him. And, whereas no deliverance will have been wrought by the beast, full deliverance for those who want it will be obtained and maintained by the protecting scepter of the Christ of God. The poor and afflicted will rejoice in His delivering power; the weak ones and the orphans will experience the strength and shelter of His arm; and the needy, those having a wish which none else can satisfy, will be satiated never more to want. Death for His own, will be abolished, and deceit and violence no longer succeed against them.

Compare this, the settled order of things to be introduced by Him, with Psalm 79:1-5. The blood of His servants so often spilled, will be spilled no more. Precious in His sight will be the blood of those then living upon the earth. Peace, which the world under fallen man has never yet fully known, and also immunity for His people on earth from man's oppression and Satan's restless activity, with all earthly powers paying homage to God's King ruling in righteousness-these are features of that day of blessedness and glory, which will abide while sun and moon shall last, throughout all generations; for as all will rest for stability on the King, and "He," we read, "shall live," a settled order of things will be established, such as has never yet been witnessed.

And then, what may appear to be stranger than all, will be seen the complete revolution of feeling in men's minds about the Lord Jesus Christ; for they will pray for His continuance (v. 15), against whom, but a short time previous, the beast and his armies will have been arrayed to keep Him out of His kingdom. The counsels of the rulers against the Lord and His Christ, first developed at the cross, will never succeed. God's purpose about His Son, in spite of all opposition, will be made good. "Men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed." And so surely will this be the case, that we have portrayed in this Psalm that time of blessedness, as if from the pen of an eyewitness. The time of the restoring of all things will arrive, but not without the presence of the central figure and the pillar of it all, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is now in heaven, but will return to earth for that era of blessedness and brightness to commence, in which the whole creation will be interested, for earth's fruitfulness (at present restrained by man's sin) will then return. "There shall be a handful [abundance] of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." How many new things will in that day be seen! Where men now look not for fertility, there will it appear; and Christ's name, so often the subject of execration, shall be perpetuated, enduring forever.

With these thoughts the psalmist concludes. Beyond them his desires for the king's Son cannot go, and as on another occasion (2 Sam. 7) he could only find vent for his feelings in worship, he here winds up with a doxology-"Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth

wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen." This is a fitting conclusion to so wondrous a theme. The prayer of David, the son of Jesse, having been ended, the last tones of his lyre which fall on the ear are those of praise!

God's View

It is not said, When YOU see the blood, but "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exod. 12:13). The soul of an awakened person often rests not on its own righteousness, but on the way in which it sees the blood. Now, precious as it is to have the heart impressed with it, this is not the ground of peace. Peace is founded on GOD'S seeing it. He cannot fail to estimate it at its full and perfect value as putting away sin. It is He that abhors and has been offended by sin; He sees the value of the blood as putting it away. It may be said, But must I not have faith in its value? This is faith in its value, seeing that God looks at it as putting away sin. Your value for it looks at it as a question of the measure of your feelings. Faith looks at God's thoughts.

God then sees the blood; on that we rest to escape judgment, not upon our own view either of sin or of the blood of the Lamb. God Himself estimates the blood of His own Son, as He it is who fully hates our sin; we feel both most when we enter into this, and rest on it in faith. Faith lays hold of His judgment of sin, and feels the need of His value for the blood of Christ.

The Good Fight of Faith

People often say, "Let us not do so and so, because if we do, we shall be sorry for it afterward." But if they said, "This is not worthy of the coming, not worthy of the kingdom," there would not be the finding of sorrow but the strength of joy in giving things up, saying, "That is of the flesh, and not something that will shine in the glory."

Looking at it as a fight, how few in this day could say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight." It had been a hard struggle, but Paul's course was just finished, and he was going home. Many believers now have not that abounding spring of joy at the thought of departing, saying, "Oh! I am going home joyfully; I have had nothing but fighting, and the thorough struggle makes the thought of going home a matter of rejoicing." If there is not joy, it is because we have not found the wilderness a place for the faithful fight that Paul found it.

The Gospel of the Kingdom: Contrasted With the Gospel of Salvation

The preaching of Jesus announced the kingdom, showed that the time was fulfilled, that the kingdom of God was at hand, that the people must repent and believe the gospel. We should distinguish between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of our salvation. Christ is the center of both; but there is a great difference between the preaching of a kingdom which is drawing near, and that of an eternal redemption accomplished, upon the cross. It is quite possible that the two truths should be announced together. And indeed we find that the Apostle Paul preached the kingdom, but he certainly also proclaimed an eternal redemption accomplished for us on the cross. Christ prophesied of His death, and announced that the Son of man should give His life for the ransom of many; but He could not announce an accomplished redemption during His life. Men ought to have received Him, and not to have put Him to death. Hence His testimony was about the kingdom which was drawing nigh.

This kingdom in its public power has been delayed because Christ has been rejected (see Rev. 11:17); and this delay lasts all the time that Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, until the time when He shall arise from the throne of His Father to judge. God has said, "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." Psalm 110:1.

It is nevertheless true that the kingdom was already come in mystery according to Matthew 13. This goes on during the time that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God; but when God's appointed time shall come, the Lord will arise and set up the kingdom, and with His own power will judge the living, and peace and happiness shall be established on the earth.

We who have received Him, while the world has rejected Him, shall go to meet Him in the air. We shall be forever with the Lord, and shall come with Him in glory when He shall appear before the world, and shall reign with Him; and, what is still far better, we shall be like Him, and always with Him in the Father's house.

Gospel Preaching: How Should It Be Done?

How needful it is not only to preach the glad tidings of a present and eternal salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, but to preach it in the Savior's style-in the bowels of Jesus Christ-to have such a divine sense in our hearts of the realities of eternal damnation and eternal salvation, as to publish the blessed tidings with deepest fervor of affection. It is here we need to watch, for careless professors abound, and lukewarmness grows apace. An address may be orthodox enough, accurate as to expression, faultless as to sound doctrine, but so cold, dry, and formal that it quickly falls to the ground. It lacks savor, and therefore power. It seems to the hearers more like a work of duty than the heartfelt utterances of one who seeks to snatch souls from eternal misery, and bring them to present reconciliation with God. The message has been so coldly delivered that it comes pointless and heartless. It is in word only-a doctrinal statement rather than a message of divine, unsearchable love.

When we preach, we should seek to do so in the Lord's strength; to go forth in real dependence on Himself, looking unto Him; not satisfied with anything less than a felt sense of His presence, being in direct exercise of faith in Himself, abiding in Him, and entering into His thoughts, His feelings as to the value of immortal souls, considering that Christ is forever glorified in the salvation of the lost one. Be assured that this only will make us earnest, fervent, successful winners of souls. Should we aim at less than the message being delivered worthy of Him, according to the deep love of His heart who sends it? If it be a work of faith and labor of love, it must flow out of personal communion with Himself. This entails much self judgment, earnest prayer, unfeigned dependence, and true exercise of faith in Himself. The apostles so felt this that they said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." O to be men of earnest prayer and simple faith! If there be earnestness with God in the closet, depend upon it there will not be lacking fervor in preaching. If our Father sees us dealing with Him in secret, be certain that He will reward us openly. Let us think of the quality of our service rather than the quantity. Let us beware of trafficking in mere Bible knowledge instead of telling out the love of God from deep, heartfelt enjoyment of personal intercourse and fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

"Thou must be true thyself,
If thou the truth wouldst teach;
Thy soul must overflow, if thou
Another soul wouldst reach.
It needs the overflow of heart
To give the lips full speech."

Have We a Heart for Christ?

It is of the utmost importance in the study of Scripture to distinguish between God's moral government of the world, and the specific hope of the Church. The entire body of the Old Testament prophecy, and much of the New, treats of the former, and in so doing presents, I need hardly say, a subject of commanding interest to every Christian.

It is interesting to know what God is doing, and will do, with all the nations of the earth - interesting to read God's thoughts about Tiro, Babylon, Nineveh, and Jerusalem - about Egypt, Assyria, and the land of Israel. In short, the entire range of Old Testament prophecy demands the prayerful attention of every true believer. But, let it be remembered, we do not find therein contained the proper hope of the Church. How could we? If we have not therein the Church's existence directly revealed, how could we have the Church's hope? Impossible.

It is not that the Church cannot find there a rich harvest of divine moral principles which she may most happily and profitably use. She undoubtedly can; but this is quite another thing from finding there her proper existence and specific hope. And yet a large proportion of the Old Testament prophecies has been applied to the Church; and this application has involved the whole subject in such mist and confusion that simple minds are scared away from the study; and in neglecting the study of prophecy, they have also neglected that which is quite distinct from prophecy, properly so called, even the hope of the Church, which hope, be it well remembered, is not anything which God is going to do with the nations of the earth, but to meet the Lord Jesus in the clouds of heaven, to be forever with Him and forever like Him.

Many may say, I have no head for prophecy. Perhaps not, but have you a heart for Christ? Surely, if you love Christ, you will love His appearing, though you may have no capacity for prophetic investigation. An affectionate wife may not have a head to enter into her husband's affairs, but she has a heart for her husband's return; she might not be able to understand his ledger and daybook, but she knows his footstep and recognizes his voice. The most unlettered saint, if only he has affection for the Person of the Lord Jesus, can entertain the most intense desire to see Him; and this is the Church's hope.

The Apostle could say to the Thessalonians, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). Now, evidently those Thessalonian saints could, at the moment of their conversion, have known little if anything of prophecy, or the special subject thereof; and yet they were at that very moment put into the full possession and power of the specific hope of the Church - even the coming of the Son. Thus it is throughout the entire New Testament. There, no doubt, we have prophecy; there too we have God's moral government; but at the same time numberless passages might be adduced in proof of the fact that the common hope of Christians in apostolic times - the simple, unimpeded, and unencumbered hope - was THE RETURN OF THE BRIDEGROOM. May the Holy Ghost revive "that blessed hope" in the Church; may He gather in the number of the elect, and "make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Have You Come As You Are? an Example of a Gospel Appeal

Dear friends, I would ask you, Have you been led to come just as you are, ungodly sinners, to God? Not to bring your own righteousness, which is nothing but filthy rags, but have you come pleading the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God? If you have, assuredly there is peace for you, for that is a sure token that God is for you. Or have you been acting against God all your lives, and have never found peace? Are you still tormented with a guilty conscience, and are you still rejecting and refusing salvation? I would earnestly beseech you to consider the danger you are in, and I would ask you to look before you and see where you are going and what you are doing. You are wandering in the midst of the wide sea of this world, you are toiling through its waves, without a prospect of deliverance; and if persisted in, you will ere long sink down into death and eternal misery....

But be of good cheer if your hearts are set on Christ; there is your stay, the anchor of your soul. If He is such, dear friends, stand forward for Him; be not ashamed to own your relationship to Him, your dependence on Him; be decided, cut short all expedients for deferring the bold acknowledgment of your being His; confess Him before men, act for Him, and live for Him in an ungodly world.

Be not debating within yourselves when you shall avow yourselves; do it at once, decidedly. Make the plunge, and trust God for the consequence. I know by experience that an open, bold confession of being Christ's is more than half the struggle over. I know the devil tempts, and says, "Oh, don't be too hasty; you might ruin the cause by over forwardness; this is not the time to confess yourself openly - wait for another opportunity." But I say, dear friends, as one who knows that if a man, in the strength of the Lord, is just brought to say to his companions and friends, "I am Christ's, and must act for Him," he will not suffer what others will feel who are creeping on, fearful and afraid to avow Him whom they desire to serve. Believe me, my friends, it is as I say - by this decided and open opposition to the world, he may at first be laughed at and mocked, but what of that? Christ was served so....

Oh! I once more entreat you to be candid. Be open, be decided, confess Christ's name on earth, and He will not be ashamed to confess your name before the whole assembled universe.

The Healthy Exercise

To me the memorizing of Scripture has been an unfailing help in doubt, anxiety, sorrow, and all countless vicissitudes and problems of life. I believe in it enough to have devoted many, many hours to stowing away passages where I can never leave them behind me nor be unable to get to them. The Word of God is the Christian's best weapon, and must be with him always. The comradeship it afforded me supplied all I needed while facing death alone on a floating piece of ice on a frozen ocean. It stood by me like the truest of true friends that it is. With my whole soul I commend the giving of a little time daily to secure the immense return memorizing of Scripture offers and insures.

Hearts Knit Together

There is not a single thing in which we have served Christ which shall be forgotten. Lazy, alas! we all are in service, but all shall come out that is real; and what is real is Christ in us, and that only. The appearance now may be very little-not much even in a religious view-but what is real will abide. Our hearts clinging closely to Christ, we shall sustain one another as members of the body of Christ. The love of Christ should hold the whole together, Christ being everything, and we content to be nothing,... helping one another, praying one for the other. I ask not the prayers of saints; I reckon on them. The Lord keep us going on in simplicity, fulfilling as the hireling our day. till Christ shall come; and then shall every man have praise of God-"Praise of God." Be that our object, and may God knit all our hearts together thoroughly and eternally.

A Hearty Wish

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Heb. 13:8.

Here is a hearty wish for your rich blessing and joy, and for your happiness and truest prosperity in the year ahead.

The Lord will again crown the year with His goodness (Psa. 65:11). "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22, 23). The psalmist could say with all confidence, "I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me." Let his outlook and his confidence be yours in the days ahead. F.W.S.

Through the yesterday of ages,

Jesus, Thou hast been the same;

Through our own life's checkered pages,

Still the one, dear, changeless name.

Well may we in Thee confide,

Faithful Saviour, proved and tried!

Helps: Who Are They and What Do They Do?

This little word occurs in the first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 12:28, where the inspired writer enumerates the various gifts and orders of ministry in the assembly. "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."

Now there is what we may call a beautiful undefinedness about the term "helps." We can see at a glance, and understand fully what is meant by an apostle, a prophet, a teacher, a miracle, a gift of healing, a government, a tongue.

But the full import of the term "helps" is not just so easily seized. It indicates a very wide field of happy and important Christian service. There are many persons in the assembly who could not be said to possess any specific gift; they are not evangelists, pastors, or teachers; but they can render effectual help to those who are.

You may sometimes find a man who is quite incompetent to take any part in public ministry, and yet he exerts a far more powerful influence for good than one who takes a prominent place. He is not a preacher or lecturer, but he takes a deep interest in the work of such. He has no thought of occupying the desk or the platform; but it does the heart good to see the way in which he opens the door for you, leads you to a seat, hands you a Bible and hymnbook.

His heart is in the work, and he is ready to do anything or everything to further the good cause. There is a genial brightness and self-forgetting elasticity about the man, rendering him a most delightful element in the assembly and in the work. He is ready for every good work --ready to serve all who may need his service. No matter what you want done, he is your man. Go to him when you will, or with what you will, he is always at your service. Difficulties are nothing to him. He only views them as an occasion for the display of energy. He is not encumbered with crotchets. He does not believe in them. His heart is free -his spirit fresh and bright. He loves Christ and His people, His servants and their work. He takes a profound interest in the progress of the gospel- in the salvation of souls - in the prosperity and growth of God's people. He is not self-occupied. He delights to see the work done, no matter who does it. He is ready to sweep the floors if need be - ready to help in every possible way in which effective help may be rendered.

Have we any difficulty in assigning such a one his place in the category of gifts? None whatever. He is one of the "helps" - a most blessed and valuable element. Would that we had more of such. We pray for evangelists, for pastors, and teachers, and so we should, for we need them sadly. But we should pray for "helps" also, for they exert a marvelous influence for good wherever they are found.

We have little idea of how much the blessing of God's people and the progress of His work are promoted by that class of persons indicated by the brief, but comprehensive, term "helps." You may often hear a man say, "Oh, I am not an evangelist or a teacher. I do not possess any gift for speaking." Well, but you can be a help. You may not be a preacher or a teacher, but you can very

effectually co-operate with such in a thousand ways. You can hold up his hands, and encourage his heart, and refresh his spirit, and further his work in numberless and nameless little ways which, you may rest assured, are most grateful to the heart of Jesus, and will be amply rewarded in the day of His coming glory.

It is a very great mistake, indeed, to suppose that no one can help the Lord's people or the Lord's work unless he has some special gift. Every one has his own place to fill, his work to do. Every bird has his own note, except the mockingbird. This latter has nothing of its own, but mimics the notes of others. How much better to be real and simple - to give forth my own note, even though it be but the note of a robin, than to be seeking to imitate the thrush or the nightingale.

What we really want is a heart for the Lord's work. Where there is this, it will not be a question as to my gift. I shall be ready for every good work. Even though my gift may be most distinct, I should hold myself in constant readiness to lend a helping hand to others, to put my shoulder to the wheel, to further the blessed work in every possible way. Gift or no gift, if I really love Christ, I shall seek to promote His cause and His glory. If I cannot preach the gospel, I can seek to gather the people; I can make them welcome. I can prove that my whole soul is in the work, and thus give a holy impetus to others. I can help by prayer, by my presence, by my very look. A genial heart, a bright happy spirit, a mind free from petty and detestable jealousies, a cordial well-wisher may prove a most delightful "help" to the work and the workman.

Beloved Christian reader, let us give ourselves to earnest prayer that the Lord may be pleased to develop in our midst that most interesting and valuable agency suggested by the heading of this paper. And may we all seek to do what we can for the furtherance of the cause and glory of that blessed One who gave His love to rescue us from everlasting burnings.

The Hope of His Calling

Eph. 1:18; 2:10

"That ye may know what is the hope of His calling." God has called you; what is the hope of the calling? What future is there in this call? We get it in verse 5, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children." I know Abba's heart now. I am to know Abba's house then. If God says, How beautiful My house will be with My Son in it, surrounded by those associated with Him, is it nothing to my heart that God already has joy in the thought? It will have a separating effect on the soul from evil to God.

"And what the riches of the glory," etc. Glory is not the same as the Father's house. There is rest in the thought of the house, whereas in the glory we get the public expression of it. What a contrast to this beggarly world down here! Here it is all toil, but what is it all leading to? To a bright, brilliant, glorious future, now made little of by people here, then made much of by God up there.

So far there is no question of life; He takes them, as it were, and shows them the corpses they were, the pit they were in. God loves to be the Center - to have round Him a circumference of blessing. What was the pit you came from? What good was there in it? God could find none, so you cannot. Everything in it is bad, though it need not come out. As the pit was down there, and nothing but evil working in it, so the blessing came from quite a different place - from the Man up there upon the throne. Had we taken a few steps toward Him? No! it is even when we were "dead in sins." It is not a question of bad fruits - "dead in sins" (Eph. 2:5) (not alive in sins, as in Romans), all entirely wrong, all dead, not a correct notion of God, nor of Christ, nor of the Holy Ghost, nor of ourselves.

In verses 5 and 6 there are three things: life giving, separation from the grave, and a place of permanent rest. Satan cannot rob me of blessing, because I am within Christ. The bringing into a place of blessing is a thing to be known individually; knowing it, and knowing the existence of it, are very different things. You can say you believe it. Have you got it yourself? Can you say, I have gone up from the tomb by a power that associates me with all that is dear to God? God looks on me and says, There is an individual who has life together with My Son. Can you say it? Is the life that you live in the flesh by faith of the Son of God?

God promised a son to Abraham; his circumstances said, Impossible, you cannot have any children. But Abraham said, in substance, Let God alone; He must see to His promises. Difficulties to believers now come in exactly the same way. Things inconsistent are brought up by conscience. If you say, That is inconsistent with the Man up there; I am ashamed of myself, you judge it in faith. But if you say, I have failed; I am no Christian, you play into Satan's hands. You do not judge yourself, but slur over the evil. We get here three things - Abba's heart, Abba's house, and that the Man, the perfect Servant of God, who was obedient even unto death, has won His place up there. He went in not only as One who had a right to go in, but because He had humbled Himself. These things just mark the place that you and I are in as Christians. God wanted to show what a God He

was, and the resources He had in His Son.

If God has raised us up together, etc., it is that we may have communion with Himself through this Christ dwelling in us by faith. We cannot get steadiness of works unless with a soul abiding in communion with God. If I am in communion with God, what do I get? If a heart be right with God, there is talking about Christ always - Christ at home in the heart. I look up and say, There is a Man on the throne of God, and He has all power in His hand; the Son of the virgin, the Seed of the woman; and God says, "This is My beloved Son," "the fullness of the Godhead." If you know Him, you may get all the fullness of God. God presents in that Man, seen there by faith, what can fill the humblest mind.

God has formed in my soul such an estimate of Christ that I could not do without Him; and more than that, He cannot do without me. Nothing is good without Christ, and the presence of Christ in anything makes it a home scene to the heart.

The valley of Baca (Psalm 84:6) is a precious place if Christ be there. Oh, what a height and depth in the truth that makes us one with Him! What an expression of love! What an expression of light!

The Hope of the Christian

The personal return of the Lord-His coming as the Son of God, into the air, to awake His sleeping saints, to change the living, and to gather both around Himself in resurrection glory-is the hope of the individual believer, and of the Church. This is the great event for which the Scriptures teach us to watch, and wait:

The conversion of the world by means of the preaching of the gospel, is not the Christian's hope; it is the Lord Himself (1 Tim. 1:1). He does not look for signs, but for the fulfillment of the Lord's own promise-"I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." His heart and eyes are fixed on heaven, not on events transpiring on the earth. These events, however important in the fulfillment of prophecy, are not his hope, nor is the return of the Lord from heaven dependent upon them. There is nothing to be fulfilled-nothing intervening between the believer and the personal advent of his beloved Lord and Master. "Surely I come quickly" is His own promise. May the response ever rise from love-filled hearts, "Come, Lord Jesus."

How to Read the Scriptures

Christians who make their own blessing their object in studying the Word of God, and are only interested in it as far as it concerns them and their own welfare, necessarily lose much of its fullness, and their times of meditation are in consequence often barren and profitless. Let us remember that though all Scripture is for us, it is not about us, except as far as the glory of Christ is bound up with our welfare.

Springing from the practice of making our own interests our guide in the study of the Word, is the use of the term "nonessential" with reference to revealed truths. Men make a distinction between truths which are "fundamental" and those which they consider "nonessential," a distinction which Scripture does not warrant. I grant that there are certain great truths, fundamental in their nature, without a knowledge of which none can lay claim to the name of a Christian. I admit, further, that there are many truths of which one may be ignorant, and yet for all that, be a true child of God.

But all that God has revealed is essential to the glory of Christ; and to neglect any part of His Word, whether prophecy, history, or doctrine, because we do not see its immediate bearing on ourselves, is to exhibit a spirit of selfishness and indifference to His interests.

It is well, of course, that we should discover the fullness which lies in all the little details of Scripture; but it is of paramount importance that we should endeavor to seize its scope as a whole. Let us take a good survey of the field, and seek to comprehend its bearings, position, etc., as a whole, before we begin to examine microscopically every blade of grass.

And then let us seek to take in the scope of each of its parts, each of the sixty-six books into which the volume of inspiration is divided. If the questions were put to us, For what purpose was each written? What is its subject? How does the inspired writer deal with it? how many of us could give an answer, even as to the books of the New Testament, let alone those of the Old? And yet all this may be learned from Scripture itself, without reference to commentaries or any other human writings.

If we would get this wider view of God's revelation, we must read consecutively; that is, we must not fly about from one part to another, reading one day in Judges and the next in Jude, without any system at all. That method of study will never give us an insight into anything but details. Who would dream of treating a story book in that way - reading a page or two in the middle one day, then a chapter at the end, and then at the beginning? Who would wonder at a boy's complaining of the difficulty of arithmetic if he made it his practice to read his book "wherever it happens to open," or "wherever he thinks it would be nice"? I do not say that on some occasions the Holy Spirit may not direct us to some special portion as peculiarly suited to our state of soul; but we find that those who as a general rule, study Scripture consecutively, see most of its beauties, and are best able to admire the perfect harmony of its various parts.

Another thing that we must never forget is our own inability to rightly understand one word of Scripture apart from the teaching of the Holy Spirit. We cannot fathom that which is infinite by that

which is finite. The mind of man will not suffice for the things of God. The most gigantic intellect, the most profound scholarship, are alike of no avail in this matter. The Holy Spirit, who in the first instance dictated the words, can alone make them intelligible to us.

And it is for this purpose, among others, that He has been given to us (1 Cor. 2:10, 16). And be it remembered that He indwells every believer in Christ (John 7:39; Eph. 1:13), so that none of us can say we are without power to understand and know the things freely given to us of God.

Unintelligence in divine truth implies either the want of diligence in study, or the lack of subjection to the Holy Spirit. God has, as it were, placed in our hands the key of the treasure house of Scripture, telling us that all is ours. Whether it be the depths of prophecy, the heights of doctrine, or the symbolism of type and shadow, nothing is beyond the reach of the saint who is both diligent and dependent.

The realization of this will send us often to our knees. We shall earnestly seek illumination from above up on the pages of the written Word, and we may take it that our prayer is answered in proportion as we discover Jesus in our daily reading.

And further, with the continued study of the Scriptures, and increased light upon their teachings, new desires will take possession of us, new motives will influence us, and our prayers will become more an expression of God's mind than of our own desires. Apart from reading the Word, our prayers are apt to be merely the expression of our own wishes, limited more or less to our own little circle of interest; while on the other hand, if we do not give prayer its place, the Word has not its proper power over us. While our minds are being stored with its riches, our consciences are left untouched, and our souls are famished.

Very often difficulties that one encounters in the study of Holy Writ seem insuperable, owing to our natural yet pernicious habit of placing comprehension before faith. We hesitate to believe what we cannot understand. But this will not do in the things of God. We must implicitly believe every word of His that we read, whether we understand it or not. We may be sure that the darkness is in us, not in His Word; and we can confidently look to Him for further light. But for this, if we dishonor Him by want of faith, we may look in vain.

We must not make reason our guide. In the Scriptures God addresses Himself not to man's intellect, but to his conscience. Where the man of human wisdom stumbles and misunderstands, the simple soul whose conscience is at work may find no difficulty. Where reason can see no path, faith may proceed without perceiving any obstacle.

In conclusion let me point out that we shall make no progress in the knowledge of Christ unless we live in the power of what we already know. God teaches us His will, that we may do it. We may look in vain for fresh light until we have put into practice what He has already taught us.

Dear Christian reader, seek that your knowledge of God's Word may increase from day to day, so that your life may be more for His glory. Let your prayer be, Help me to live the truth that I have learned.

I Love Thee Still

That there is a growing tendency to looseness and laxity must be apparent to any who are taking account of things, and especially does this take the form of worldliness in 'amusements, dress, furnishing of our homes, our affiliations and companionships.

The cross, in which we once gloried, as crucified with Christ, seeing on the one side a dead world and on the other a dead self, we view as the transaction in which our sins were put away, and there we pause, disinclined to accept it as the end of ourselves for the world and the end of the world for us (Gal. 6:14). "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," has ceased to be our prayer. We do not want the world rendered an object of contempt and shame to us, nor do we want to be rendered this to the world; and yet, this is where the cross leaves us.

We have lost CHRIST, maybe not as the Object of faith, but as the Object of affection. All declension begins here. With many of us it would seem to be enough to know Him as a Savior. We are quite willing to use His sorrows and sufferings to separate us from our sins, but we do not want these to separate us from ourselves and from our surroundings. With the individual as with the Church, we are under the charge of "Thou hast left thy first love," and solemnly called to "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen." There may be much in us that He can commend, but if He has lost His place in our hearts, if affections are alienated, we are "fallen." Searching and solemn indictment! And what is His word to us? "Repent"! See Revelation 2:4 and 5.

We but repeat the sin of the Pharisees when we become content and complacent with externals. The truth must give us a state that comports and agrees with the place we are in. If this is effected, we will not "walk in the manners" of that world from which His cross, has separated us.

Has the blessed Spirit been so grieved that He can no longer make good to us what is true of us in Christ? Have we lost the sense of His preciousness in our souls (1 Pet. 2:7)? What disposition or desire can be satisfied apart from CHRIST in whom every beauty, every charm, and every glory meet? All must be disappointing, ephemeral, and empty. The joy you are looking for, you are leaving behind you when you turn away from HIM. Once its passions and pleasures, its gold and its glory, you counted but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord. "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?" Iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold.

But HE is the same, and our failure has not diminished His fullness; it is for us still. However chilled in heart or wayward in walk, I hear Him saying, I love thee still. Is there not a message from the cross where love's sweetest story was so fully told, where we became His at such awful cost, where He bought us so dearly?

"I gave it all for thee;

What hast thou given for Me?"

How much we are missing when we leave Him out of our life! And how much He is missing! The next thing to being with Him there, is to have Him with us here, to have His conscious presence, and so have a part with Him. When everything was slipping, Paul wrote to Timothy, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit." Do we catch this? It is the first movement toward being already in heaven. He was given for us, glory to His name! But have we lost Him as the One who gave Himself for us? Oh, what a loss, since "Christ is all." He the exalted One, "far above all heavens," and we not only the object of His consideration, but of His love!

Do you begin to grasp that height to which HE has been carried, "far above all heavens"? HE has the preeminence in all things; and I am His, "and his desire is toward me." What a secret to be in; a secret angels cannot know. Wait before HIM until HE fills you with HIS own fullness. For one look at HIM there, Paul counted "all things but loss." No wonder he passed into an ecstasy, and was "beside" himself. Stephen, occupied with Him and His glory, wore an angel's face. Look long and lingeringly in that face that streams with the light of His glory, and it will cast a shade on all below.

And are you passing it all by? It is your loss now, and eternally. Once in the secret of what Christ is, earth's joys will become stale; and as His coming casts the light of the nearing glory across this "little while," it will take the burden from your cross, and the sharpness from the thorns as you "haste to meet Him with a bridal hymn."

Indifference, Neutrality, Self-Assertion

Revelation 3

It will be found that these three are the great leading features of the professing church, fully developed in its last phase; and those whose eyes are both opened and anointed at the present time see very distinctly how rapidly the growth of these evil principles is being developed, so that all the elements which will reach maturity in full blown Laodiceanism are being, as it were, rapidly hurried to the front. But to see this in the midst of the clouds of dust which Satan is perpetually raising, there must be that which Scripture describes as the "senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Now the first great mark of infection with this evil principle is the indifference to Christ as Lord, which very plainly displays itself, though in a form and guise which deceive the unwary. It is true that in terms the authority of Christ is not denied, but practically it is not recognized. And, moreover, there are various shades of this, as of every evil thing; but the question is not the amount which may be accredited to us, but whether we are, through grace, entirely apart from it ourselves. Has He not of late, as our Lord, given a very solemn proof of His authority as well as His right to sift and try and test that with which His name has been, and, through grace, is still associated on earth? And are there not many ways and forms of saying to Him, "What doest Thou"? Now what shall we say to the Lord's contention, the Lord's test, the Lord's voice like many waters, and the Lord's eyes as a flame of fire? Alas for us all if our eyes are not open to see this, and if we can rise no higher than men and their ways!

But it is solemn to remember how the road has been prepared so that His way should not be perceived. The enemy has skillfully set traps to catch the feet of the saints of God. It is well for us to remember the character of his opposition now; violence and corruption are the two great weapons by which Satan has wrought from the first, and the last is the more to be dreaded, because more subtle. "The wiles of the devil" have now to be withstood on God's ground, and we need the whole armor of God, buckled on, and the spirit of dependence maintained in order successfully to resist the foe. Where this is not the case, as the story of the Gibeonites in Joshua sorrowfully illustrates, we fall a prey to the corrupting wiles of the devil; and it will display itself where the battle rages most fiercely. In Laodicea there will be an indifference to Christ as Lord, which is deeply heartbreaking. There will be a lack of conscience and spiritual affection which would secure His blessed name being associated with that which is repugnant to Him who is holy and true; and last, where this corruption gets sway, there will be exhibited an antagonism to His thoughts and mind which is most solemn to contemplate.

The next characteristic mark of the professing church in its closing state, is neutrality; "neither cold nor hot." It is very solemn to see that indifference to Christ is the producing cause of this lukewarm state. In Laodicea He is outside, and they are neutral inside! As to evil, the saints if true to Christ would be intolerant; patience and long-suffering would assuredly mark them in their mode of acting as well as in their spirit; but where these blessed qualities are pleaded for a toleration of sin, and a

course of action is attempted, to be founded or based upon this, it is clearly the spirit of this neutrality concerning which the Lord says to Laodicea in His indignation, "I would thou wert cold or hot." Moreover, on heavenly ground, there can be no such principle. "Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries?" is the abiding illustration and witness of this great fact. And may I not appeal to another solemn witness of what I am setting forth? If the history of God's testimony during the past century be prayerfully read and pondered, it will be seen that at this very day the fruit of this very principle of neutrality abides. Oh, for eyes to see and hearts to feel for Christ in all this; thus it will be clear to us as taught of God, that the path of safety is the path of faith, and that holiness is, as it were, the very pavement of that way, and Christ the company which those who are for Him enjoy as walking in it. This, and this alone, can suit Him; and He gives us to know how blessed it is for us, and so we rejoice that "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it." It is a divine path and outside, because above the most acute creature wisdom and ken. Moreover, this wisdom cannot be procured by man as such, for he "knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.... The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold." Such then is the nature and value of the path of faith and wisdom in God's estimate of it; and when He further proclaims its character unto men, mark well His words - "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28.)

The last feature in Laodicea, which I will notice here, is the miserable self-assertion and self-complacency evinced in the language, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Oh, conceive such words, and the blessed Lord outside! This is the full development of Laodiceanism; it is found alongside indifference to Christ and a lukewarmness which is neither cold nor hot. Does it not become all His saints to watch against this spirit? He calls it "miserable and poor." Alas! how soon any of us might be corrupted and infected with it; and things which are all right in themselves may be used by Satan in his wiles to invest us with this spirit; for instance, if ourselves, our service, our work, our usefulness, are before our eyes instead of Christ, how soon the spirit of Laodicea will enfold us in the meshes of its self-complacent net! Christ alone is our safety and rest. To keep His word and not deny His name is the reach of "Little strength"; yet it is also our preservation as our comfort and joy.

May the Lord in great grace preserve His own in this day from the principles we have been reviewing, and may He also in sovereign mercy rescue from their power and influence any who have fallen under them.

It Is Written

The words of our Lord Jesus as found in Matt. 9:8 have come forcibly to mind since the Roman Catholic Church announced the dogma of the Assumption. Our Lord, quoting from Isaiah, said to the Jewish leaders, "In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

When He was here on earth the Jews were zealously observing many teachings and commandments of men while they slighted the plain Word of God. They were very careful not to transgress the tradition of the elders, but their very tradition transgressed the commandment of God (Matt. 15:2, 3).

And so it is with large segments of Christendom today. Church rules, church teachings, and church dogmas are carefully adhered to while the Word of God is ignored. Who gave any man, or any group of men, the right to add to God's infallible Word? We have in the Word of God the whole revealed mind of God; nothing can be added to that, and nothing taken away. Since that Word was completed, there has not been any further revelation to supplement it, nor is there going to be. God has recorded the past, told us of the present, and revealed the future. He has given us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3); nothing else is needed. The Apostle Paul, writing by inspiration, said, "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill [or, to complete] the word of God." Col. 1:25. It was given to him to unfold "the mystery" and to give all that we are to have about the Church.

Furthermore, God in His Word has made no provisions for men to make additions to it, but rather takes us back to the beginning when speaking of the last days. Whenever error comes in, the resource of the saints of God is "that which was from the beginning." The Apostle John warns the saints of the dangers of the "last time" and refers them to the truth "from the beginning." (See both his first and second epistles.) The Apostle Peter, in view of his decease, warned of coming dangers and spoke about the saints having "these things always in remembrance" (2 Pet. 1:15)- not something to be revealed by some person at a later date. Jude, in view of the last days, exhorted the saints that they should "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3. The Apostle Paul, in view of his departure, told the elders of Ephesus that men would arise speaking perverse things, and grievous wolves would enter in, but the all-sufficient resource for them would be "God, and... the word of His grace" (Acts 20:17-32). And in the last epistle he wrote, he foretold of the last days of Christendom with their appalling moral conditions which make perilous or difficult times; but he held up the "holy Scriptures" as something that would remain stable, always trustworthy, and useful: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

And what is this new dogma, this precept of men that was introduced with great pomp and ceremony, and by papal decree made binding on all Catholics everywhere? It is that the virgin Mary after her death was taken bodily into heaven, and her body "saw no corruption." And now if

any Catholic "presumes to think otherwise" he is branded as a heretic, as one who has departed from the faith. Such is the pressure that is applied to the acceptance of a commandment of men.

This dogma is another step in ascribing to Mary that which alone belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone as a man down here among men was without sin, and He alone was raised from the dead without seeing corruption. Of Him, and of Him only, did the 16th Psalm speak: "For Thou wilt not leave My soul in Sheol, neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to see corruption." v. 10; J.N.D. Trans. The Apostle Peter confirmed this when speaking by the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). On that memorable occasion Peter expounded the Scriptures to show that the Lord Jesus was delivered by the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," and that God raised Him from the dead without seeing corruption, according to the word spoken by the mouth of David, and recorded in the 16th Psalm. He proved that David had not been speaking about himself, for he was dead and buried, and his sepulcher was still there; David saw corruption, but he "being a prophet... spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell [hades], neither His flesh did see corruption" (vv. 30, 31). The Apostle Paul rehearsed the same thing at Antioch in Pisidia: "Wherefore He saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption." Acts 13:35-37. In all this there is no room for "Mary, or any other person, to share the singular glory that belongs to Christ. To affirm that it was true of Mary, is to "consent not to wholesome words... and the doctrine which is according to godliness."

Many legends, dreams, visions, speculations, and myths have been interwoven with this false assumption, and many unscriptural notions have become correlative; for instance, this has led to the reference to Mary reigning as the "Queen of Heaven."

Perhaps it is significant that the only place where we find the expression "the queen of heaven" in Scripture, is in the book of Jeremiah (chaps. 7 and 44), where we have Israel indicted for the gross idolatry of worshiping this false deity. All became involved in it - "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven." Chap. 7:18. In Israel's day this probably referred to the moon; but, alas, in Christendom it is Mary.

In Scripture we never read of a queen reigning in heaven, nor really of a queen in heaven. The New Testament reveals that the 'Church (that body of believers from Pentecost to the rapture) is to be "the bride, the Lamb's wife." Mary will be a part of that Church, a part of the bride, for she found a Savior in the Lord Jesus, and was present among the disciples in Acts 1, waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit to baptize all believers into "one body," which also came to pass a few days later, on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2.

In Revelation 19 where the marriage of the Lamb is prophetically recorded, there are only two companies of believers, the bride herself (the Church of this dispensation), and the guests, "they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (the saints of other ages, as John the Baptist said of himself that he was "the friend of the Bridegroom"). No special place is here found for Mary; she will have a blessed portion as a part of that Church arrayed in fine linen.

Figuratively in the gospels "the mother of Jesus" sometimes represents Israel. She was present in Cana of Galilee at the marriage feast where Jesus turned the water into wine (John 2), but that scene is prophetic in character, symbolizing the wondrous time that is coming during the Millennium when the Lord shall bless Israel and give them the wine of joy which they have so long lacked.

Let us stand on the firm ground of the unalterable Word of God which lives and abides forever, remembering that "Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Pro. 30:5, 6.

Jesus Christ the Same Today

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Heb. 13:8.

There are many of God's beloved children who know little - comparatively nothing - of their portion in Jesus Christ for today.

In the blessed Lord Jesus they have found forgiveness of their sins. They have received the message of His love toward them. They have owned a crucified Jesus-the Savior who put away their guilt "by the sacrifice of Himself." They know that the one perfect, atoning sacrifice of Christ has put away sin, and that "life and immortality" are brought to light by the gospel of the grace of God. In the sure and certain knowledge of peace with God, the purged conscience rests, while a song of praise flows forth for the wondrous redemption wrought out for them. As "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," with adoring hearts they thank God for a settled yesterday.

Then, from that wondrous scene at Calvary, they can by faith look forward to a glorious future, which the perfect work of the holy, spotless Victim, the God man, Christ Jesus, has secured for them- the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled,... reserved in heaven" for them- "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Should they have to pass through death, with joyful triumph they can say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me." Neither time nor place can cast a shadow on the brightness of their "tomorrow." In sweet anticipation they joyfully sing,

"We expect a bright tomorrow,

All will be well!"

Yes, they have learned that the Jesus of the cross is the Lord of the glory. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday,... and forever."

But let each of us ask ourselves, How much do we know and enter into our blessed portion of "Jesus Christ the same... today"? Between the cross and the glory lie the sands of the desert - the wilderness through which we pass to the rest that "remaineth... to the people of God." Around us we cannot fail to see the combined forces of evil. The enemy of our souls would fain worry, perplex, and distract us. And perhaps in no form are we so little prepared for his subtle workings as when they meet us in the wear and tear of our daily life. It is in the today of our history that Satan would rob us of that blessed portion which is ours fully to enjoy - even the consciousness of the constant, never changing interest and sympathy of Christ with us on the way. Yet this is exactly what the Lord Himself seeks to make known to His own. There is not a trouble or a care which crosses our pathway but which He has destined for our blessing. But occupied with the danger or difficulty of the hour, do we not often miss the blessing, and grow disheartened and dismayed with the perils of the way? Our hearts are not slow to answer that such is too often the case, and that the cause of this is nothing less than our lack of knowing more of "Jesus Christ the same... today," in His ever present sympathy.

Shall not our hearts yearn then to know Him better, and shall we not at once give Him the place He longs for in the "today" of our history? What are obstacles and hindrances with Him? Let the Lord's own words reply: He says, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." And again, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end." Lovingly and tenderly He watches us from on high, delighting to make known to us His all sufficiency for every hour of need-His sustaining grace for every exercise through which we are called to pass. Let us avail ourselves of this rich provision for our daily need - the treasure made ours through faith in Christ Jesus. God's wondrous dealings with us in the past, and His assured blessings in the future, will but become more truly marvelous in our eyes as we learn, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the efficacy and fullness of our present portion in "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

Jesus: Prophet, Priest, King

In Luke 10:39, Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word, owning Him as the Prophet-the One who had come from the Father's bosom to reveal the Father.

In John 11:32, 33, Mary in her sorrow falls at Jesus' feet and weeps, and He weeps with her. Here she owns Him as her High Priest, and found He was one who could be touched with a feeling of her infirmities, and came boldly to Him who was full of grace and truth, for the grace and help she needed.

In John 12:3, Mary anointed His feet, "and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." Sweet and diffused as its fragrance was, it was not so sweet as her faith was to the heart of her Lord. So precious was it in His esteem, that He declared its fragrance should be known wherever His gospel came.

Matthew 26:12, 13-"She did it for My burial." Her faith understood what even the disciples could not understand. She saw Him slain, as the Lamb, for the sins of the people; and looking (I believe) beyond His death and burial to His resurrection, in verse 7 she anoints Him as king in Zion, the character in which we find Him immediately after entering Jerusalem, exhibiting in weakness what He will hereafter accomplish in resurrection power and glory.

May our faith recognize our earth rejected and despised Lord in all these, His precious offices: sitting at His feet to learn; weeping at His feet, in the assurance of His sympathy in all our sorrows; and looking forward with joy to that time when He shall be manifested as King of kings, and Lord of lords; and we shall reign with Him in glory.

Joy in Suffering

Of all my past life, the sweetest, choicest portion has beyond degree been the two past years. Oh, what a time of mercy it has been to me!-a time of humbling, and a time of love. I believe that more joy has flowed through my heart in these two years of sifting, than all the joy from all sources put together during the preceding sixty years, and that fifty times over. I really knew not that so much of heaven could be engaged in this world of sin and sorrow, as I know now-for heaven is often in my little room. Blessed, blessed be God for the special gift of these two years. He has put me into a Nebuchadnezzar furnace, but He has been with me all through it.

If we consult the clear statements of the Word of God, and the uniform experience of the most advanced saints, there is no condition under heaven so blessed as to be in the fiery furnace, with the presence of Jesus sweetly enjoyed in it.

Judgment Seat of God and of Christ

I am not aware that this expression, "The judgment seat of God" (J.N.D. Trans.), or "The judgment seat of Christ," is found anywhere else than in Romans 14 and 2 Corinthians 5; in the first of these two passages, with a view to present individual judgments; in the second, with a view to provoke to do good. The subject in itself is one of the most solemn and, at the same time, most blessed, and this so much the more as we understand it rightly. I believe that each act of our lives will be manifested then before the tribunal, according as the grace of God and His ways with us in connection with our own acts will be known then. We read (Romans 14) that "every one of us shall give account of himself to God," and the word in this passage mentions the tribunal in connection with the exhortation to brethren not to judge one another in respect of days, meats, or any other such thing.

I am disposed to think that the acts alone will be subject to manifestation; but all the private acts of our life depend so intimately upon our inward feelings, that it is in a certain sense difficult to distinguish the acts from the inward thoughts. The acts manifest the power of the thought, or of the feeling. I believe that the whole of our acts will be detailed there, before the judgment seat; not for us, however, as if we were in the flesh, and thus to our condemnation, but to make evident to our own eyes the grace that occupied itself with us, regenerate or unregenerate. In the counsels of God I am elect before the foundation of the world; hence, I think that my own history will be detailed before the judgment seat, and parallel with it the history of the grace and of the mercy of God toward me. The why and the how we did this or that will be manifested then. For us the scene will be declarative - not judicial. We are not in the flesh before God; in His eyes, by His grace, we are dead. But then if we have walked according to the flesh, we must see how we lost in blessing thereby, and what loss we have incurred; and, on the other hand, the ways of God toward us - all ways of wisdom, of mercy, and of grace - will be perfectly known and understood by us for the first time.

The history of each one will come out in perfect transparency; it will be seen how you yielded, and how He preserved you; how your foot slipped, and how He raised you up. Again, how you were drawing near danger and shame, and how He by His own arm interposed. I believe this is the bride making herself ready, and I consider that moment is a wondrous one! There will be no flesh then to be condemned; but the new nature will enter into the full knowledge of the care and of the love which in true holiness and in righteousness, and even in grace, have followed us step by step all through the running of the race. Some parts of our life, till then entirely unexplained, will be fully disclosed, and become altogether plain; some tendencies of our nature that perhaps we do not judge to be as pernicious and deadly as they are, and for the mortification of which we are perhaps now subjected to a discipline that we may not have interpreted aright, will be then perfectly explained; and what is more, the very falls that plunge us now into such bitter anguish, will be seen then to be that which God used to preserve us from something more terrible.

I do not think that until then we shall ever have a full knowledge of the badness of our flesh. How blessed for us to know that then it will be not only all over with the flesh in the counsel of God, but that the flesh will no longer be attached to us! On the other side, I doubt not the manifestation of God's grace toward us individually will be so magnificent that even the sense of the perversity of the flesh that we had, if it could possibly enter there, would be excluded by the greatness of the sense of divine goodness. Why do we not deny and mortify the flesh when we think of that hour? The Lord grant that we may do so more and more to the glory of His grace. The great subject of the judgment seat brings the soul to a very full knowledge of our individual standing.

Knowing God's Will

The knowledge of God's will is based on the spiritual state of the soul - wisdom and spiritual understanding. "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Col. 1:9. And this is of all practical importance. No particular direction by man as to conduct meets this at all-rather saves us from the need of spiritual understanding. No doubt a more spiritual mind may help me in the discernment of God's will; but God has connected the discovery of the path of His will, His way, with the inward state of the soul, and causes us to pass through circumstances-human life here below-to test and to discover to ourselves what that state is, and to exercise us therein. The Christian has by his spiritual state to know God's ways. The Word is the means. (Compare John 17:17, 19.)

God has a way of His own which the vulture's eye hath not seen, known only to the spiritual man, connected with, flowing from, and to, the knowledge of God. (Compare Exod. 33:13.) Thus the Christian walks worthy of the Lord; he knows what becomes Him, and walks accordingly, that he may please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the knowledge of God.

Look up!

There is not a single thing in which we have served Christ, which shall be forgotten. Lazy, alas! we all are in service, but all shall come out that's real; and what's real is Christ in us, and that only. The appearance now may be very little - not much even in a religious view - but what's real will abide. Our hearts clinging closely to Christ, we shall sustain one another as members of the body of Christ. The love of Christ should hold the whole together, Christ being everything, and we content to be nothing... helping one another, praying one for the other. I ask not the prayers of saints - I reckon on them. The Lord keep us going on in simplicity, fulfilling as the hireling our day, till Christ shall come; and then every man shall have praise of God - "Praise of God"; be that our object, and may God knit all our hearts together thoroughly and eternally.

The Lord Is Coming: When — Why — How — Where — Whither?

WHEN? It may be today! The Word of God does not tell us; but we read that "the coming of the Lord draweth NIGH" (Jas. 5:8), and again, "Surely I come QUICKLY" (Rev. 22:20).

WHY? In order to take His blood-bought ones, dead and living, to be where He is. Hence we read that "the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds,... and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). And again, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). Notice, the word "ye" excludes mere professors such as the "foolish virgins" of Matthew 25.

HOW? "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). "Behold, I come quickly" (Rev. 3:11). Thus He comes in Person—"the Lord Himself."

WHERE? The meeting place shall be in the air, and not on earth. The Lord shall descend; they shall "be caught up... to meet the Lord in the air." Such is the appointed trysting-place.

WHITHER? To the Father's house on high, the heavenly home of the children of God, to the prepared mansion above, and the joys of the eternal presence of the Lord. (See John 14:1-3.)

The Lord Thy Keeper

Psalm 121

In this beautiful Psalm we have the experiences of a believer who, in the midst of trials, finds in the LORD his help and unfailing resource. The first verse is really a question. It should read, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: from whence shall my help come?" (R.V.)

The God fearing man finds himself faced with trials and difficulties, but realizes that in himself he has no power to meet the circumstances. He needs "help." The greatest resource of weakness in the presence of trial is often the self confidence that leads us to think we can meet the trial in our own strength, or by our own wisdom. We have to learn, and it may be like Peter of old, through bitter experience that, in the presence of trial and temptation, we have no strength in ourselves. At every step we need a helper to support us in the trial, and carry us through the trial.

Realizing his need of help, the question immediately arises in the soul of the psalmist, "From whence shall my help come?" He is surrounded by mountains that look strong, imposing, and immovable, even as there are those in the world that apparently are firmly established in power, and unassailable by an enemy. But can we trust in any fellow creature? The prophet Jeremiah tells us, "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel." Jer. 3:23. Realizing his need of help, and that the help of man is in vain, the godly man turns from the creature to the Creator; and very blessedly he says, "My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

He does not fall back on the acknowledgment of a general truth that there is help in the LORD, but, in simple personal faith, he says, "My help cometh from the LORD."

In the remaining verses of the Psalm, the Spirit of God answers this simple faith by unfolding to us the blessings of the one who looks to the LORD for his help. The one recurring thought in these verses is the constant care of the LORD. The word "keep" is the characteristic word of the

Psalm. Bearing in mind that the word "preserve," in verses 7 and 8, should be translated "keep," it will be noticed that this encouraging word occurs 6 times in the last 6 verses.

"He will not suffer thy foot to be moved." The soul learns that, looking to the LORD for help, he will be kept amid all dangers. In days when we may be faced with sudden dangers, working desolation, how good to be encouraged by the word, "Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken." Pro. 3:25, 26. If we take our eyes off the LORD, and get occupied with the passing prosperity of the wicked, we may have to say, like the man of Psalm 73, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped." Looking to the LORD, and rejoicing in the LORD, we shall be able to say, with Hannah of old, "He will keep the feet of His saints,... for by strength shall no man prevail" (1 Sam. 2:9).

The road we travel may at times be rough, the enemy may oppose with his wiles and snares; temptations may abound, and difficulties arise—all these trials the LORD may allow—but there is one thing He will not allow. He will not suffer the feet of those that trust in Him to be moved from the path that leads to glory. Thus, in the next Psalm, in response to the Lord's word, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved," the godly soul can say with the utmost confidence, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." Psalm 122:2. The last words of the Lord to Peter were, "Follow Me." He has marked out the path for the Christian; and if, with our eye upon Christ as our unfailing help, we follow Him, it will lead far into the depths of glory where He has gone.

"For the path where our Savior has gone,
Has led up to His Father and God,
To the place where He's now on the throne;
And His strength shall be ours on the road."

"He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." The one who looks in simple faith to the LORD, learns that His care is unceasing. An apostle may sleep on the mount in the presence of a glory too bright for nature, and again in the garden in the presence of a sorrow too deep for our endurance; but the One who is our keeper will "neither slumber nor sleep." A backsliding saint, like Jonah of old, may be "fast asleep," even when the LORD is working, the wind is rising, the sea is raging, the ship is sinking, and the men of the world are trembling; but there is One, who having loved His own which are in the world, loves them unto the end with a love that never ceases to care for His own amid all the storms of life.

"Thou weariest not, most gracious Lord, Though we may weary grow;
In season, the sustaining word
Thou giv'st our hearts to know."

3) "The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand." Looking to the LORD for His help, the soul is assured that the help of the LORD is always available. A friend at our right hand is a friend at our side, to whom we can turn at any moment. So David can say, "I have set the LORD always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Psalm 16:8. The wicked man, trusting in himself, "said in his heart, I shall not be moved," only to come under the judgment of the LORD (Psalm 10:6). The godly man, trusting in the LORD at his right hand, can say, "I shall not be moved." Moreover, he can say it with the utmost confidence, for if the Lord says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,... we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Heb. 13:5, 6. How good to realize there is a friend beside me, to whom I can turn—One with all wisdom to guide in every difficulty, with all power to overcome every opposition, with all sympathy in every sorrow, and all grace for every weakness, and mercy for every need.

"The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid;
But God is round about me,

And can I be dismayed?"

"The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." The believer looking to the LORD for his help, is assured that he will be kept at all seasons. In a world of warring nations, we have to face ever present dangers, both "by day" and "by night." The LORD does not say to the believer, Thou shalt not have to face these terrors, even as others; but He says, If you make Me your refuge, and put your trust in Me, "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday." Psalm 91:5, 6.

"The LORD shall preserve [keep] thee from all evil; He shall preserve [keep] thy soul." The believer that looks to the LORD for his help, will be kept from all evil. At a time when the world, as in the days of Noah, is increasingly marked by corruption and violence, evil will take many forms. Scripture speaks of evil thoughts, evil imaginations, evil words, evil deeds, and evil doers. The Christian, being blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, will in a special way be opposed by the "spiritual wickedness in high places" that is working behind the scenes. Nevertheless, looking to the LORD, the believer will, "in the power of His might," be able to withstand every attack of the enemy in "the evil day," and thus be kept from evil (Eph. 6:10-13).

Moreover, in a world in which we know not what a day may bring forth, how good to know that, of the one who looks to the LORD for his help, it can be said, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD." Psalm 112:7. The Apostle Paul warns us that we live in a day when "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2 Tim. 3:13. In his day he had to meet those who did him "much evil," but, trusting in the Lord, he could say, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom." (2 Tim. 4:14, 18.)

"Naught can stay our earthly progress,

More than conquerors we shall be,

If our eyes, whate'er the danger,

Look to Thee, and none but Thee."

"The LORD shall preserve [keep] thy going out and thy coming in." The soul that looks to the LORD for his help can count upon the unfailing care of the LORD in all circumstances. "Going" and "coming" speak of the changing circumstances that mark a world of unrest. In the gospel day, the Lord could say to His disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." Mark 6:31. In His compassionate care the Lord will give us times of rest "apart" from the busy world; but, down here, it will only be "rest a while"-words that indicate we must be again in movement. For the eternal rest we must look on. "There remaineth... a rest to the people of God." Of the one that enters into that blessed rest we read, "He shall go no more out." (Heb. 4:9; Rev. 3:12.) In the meantime, in all the busy round of a life of toil in a world of need, the one that looks to the Lord for his help can count on the Lord to keep him in every circumstance.

"Wherever He may guide me, No want shall turn me back;

My Shepherd is beside me, And nothing can I lack.

His wisdom ever waketh, His sight is never dim;

He knows the way He taketh, And I will walk with Him."

"From this time forth, and for evermore." Finally, we learn that the one who looks to the Lord for his help may be assured that he will be kept through all time, even for evermore. The psalmist, doubtless, had the millennial reign in view; the Christian can give a wider application to the words as he looks on to a glad eternity to be spent "evermore" with Christ and like Christ in the Father's house, where He had gone to prepare a place for His heavenly people. The Lord can say of His sheep, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." John 10:28. In the beautiful picture of Luke 15, the Lord finds His lost sheep, "layeth it on his shoulders," and "cometh home." Nothing less than His home will do for His sheep. We may wander, but He finds His sheep; He keeps them in His strength in their passage through time, and at last He will bring all His wandering sheep home to be "FOREVER WITH THE LORD."

We thus learn from this beautiful Psalm that, trusting in the LORD, and looking to Him for our help, we shall find, He will keep us from all danger; His care will be unceasing; His help is always available; He will keep us at all seasons; He will keep us from all evil; He will keep us in all circumstances; He will keep us through all time for evermore.

"O keep my soul, then, Jesus

Abiding still with Thee;

And if I wander, teach me Soon back to Thee to flee."

Love and Service

Love begets love. It is the fire I sit at, that warms me. The nearer the fire, the warmer I am. The nearer I am to the heart of Christ, the warmer will be my own, and the more intense the flame of love to Him. As well might I think of getting warmed by going out to the garden and looking at the snow, as getting more love to Christ by looking to myself, thinking of myself, and trying to increase my love for Him. But, somehow, many say, I do not grow in love to Him, and in appreciation of His love to me; and I do desire to feel more love to Him. Well then if it is the fire I sit at that warms me, it is also the food I eat that satisfies me. Let thy soul then feed on Christ. And a rich repast thou wilt find in this wonderful subject. Meditate thereon. It will bear being studied word by word. And oh, think of the heart that each word flows from. Unbelief lets the words of Christ go for nothing; faith feeds on them. But be sure and rise in thy meditations to the heart whence they flow. Ever study His words in fellowship with Himself. Beware of separating the Word from the Person of Christ. Thus shall 'thy love increase, and thy practical conformity to Himself grow exceedingly.

Love Directs Itself to Its Object

The disciples indeed had their joy in Christ while as yet He was down here; but when they saw Him ascend, He drew their spirit after Him - as the needle always points to the north, so love directs itself to its object. We set our minds on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and where, together with Him, we are partakers of the heavenly calling. When the Lord passed forty days on the earth after His resurrection, the disciples were doubtless often agitated and unsettled, not knowing what He would do; but when He led them out to Bethany, and they saw Him ascending to where He now is - to the presence of the Father the scene of their joy was plainly in heaven. Knowing what had occurred, they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy." What was the secret of their joy? Was it in anything on earth? No indeed. So now with each one of us.

"The path where our Savior has gone,
Has led up to His Father and God,
To the place where He's now on the throne,
And His strength shall be ours on the road."

Made for God

How strange it is that the things for which men make their greatest play - the bounties of this life - so quickly lose their glitter, their enchantment. Yet it is really no mystery. Man was made for God! There is no real fulfillment short of a harmonious relationship with his Creator. And in those rare instances where spirituality and material abundance combine, the wealth is always used to promote things that outlast the transitory.

You may own the most expensive automobile ever made, but it would be worthless in the ocean, for it was not made to sail the seas. On the highway it is a dream, on the ocean a nightmare! Why? Because it is out of its element in water.

So with man. He was not created for this world alone, but for an eternity with God. Out of that relationship he is worthless.

Man's Sad History

It is striking to observe in man's history, that whatever good thing God set up, the first thing that man ever did was to ruin it. Man's first act was an act of disobedience; he fell into sin, and broke all relation between himself and God; he was afraid of Him who had filled his cup with blessings. Noah, escaped from the deluge that had swallowed up a whole world except his own family, becomes drunken, and authority is dishonored and lost in him. While the law was being given, before Moses came down from the mount, Israel made for themselves the golden calf. Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire on the first day of their service, and Aaron is forbidden to enter into the most holy place in his robes of glory and beauty, and indeed in any robe at all, except on the great day of atonement (Lev. 16). In the same way Solomon, David's son, falls into idolatry, and the kingdom becomes divided. The first head of the Gentiles, if we go on to speak of him on whom God conferred the ruling power, made a great image, and persecuted those who were faithful to Jehovah. Nor has the external or professing church escaped the common law of disobedience and ruin any more than the rest.

Messianic Psalms: God's King: Psalm 102

"A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed" (or exhausted) "and poureth out his complaint before the LORD," is the title in the Hebrew prefixed to this Psalm.

A peculiarity about this should be noticed. It is not uncommon to meet with a title affixed to a Psalm, recounting some special circumstances under which it was written. Psalm 3; 7; 18; 30; 34; 51; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59; 60; 63, and 142 are examples of this; but in each case they refer to some incident in the life of David which furnished an occasion for the utterance of his heart. And though there are in the book Psalms of Asaph, of Heman, and of Ethan, and one by Moses, yet the only composer, whose circumstances are stated as having called forth any of these inspired compositions, is David, the type of the Lord Jesus as God's Anointed, suffering from others before being seated firmly on his throne.

In the Psalm before us, however, while we have the circumstances stated under which it was composed, the name of the afflicted one, with whose trials we are hereby made acquainted, is withheld from us. The question then might be asked, Was the name withheld by accident or by design? By design we must surely agree, for not until the epistle to the Hebrews was written, was it (we may well believe) generally known to whom the Psalm referred. Then the ellipsis could be filled up with the name of the suffering One, who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, God over all, blessed forever. Who penned the Psalm by the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost, or what were the peculiar trials of the writer under which this divine effusion was poured forth, we shall never know while on earth.

At what epoch or at what place the sacred penman put on record these wonderful words, are questions we must leave undetermined; and though they are the expression of an individual that we have not before our eyes, we can very intelligently peruse them by the light cast on the subject from the epistle to the Hebrews.

This brings out a very interesting point in connection with the structure of the Word of God; namely, the existence of latent truth - truth not apparent on the surface, yet really in the text, which when brought out, all can see was actually there. At times passages of Scripture are applied to individuals and to events with which they have no direct connection. We have an instance in the application by Matthew (chap. 2:17, 18) of Jeremiah's words in chapter 31:15 of his prophecy. Then was fulfilled, says the evangelist, the prophet's words with reference to the sorrow caused by the Babylonish captivity; not indeed that Jeremiah predicted what Matthew relates, but the evangelist could apply the language of the son of Hilkiah to the general sorrow caused by the massacre of the infants in Bethlehem.

It is not, however, any accommodation of our Psalm to a purpose foreign to its original intention, which its use in Hebrews suggests; but it is the true meaning of it, which its real Author, the Holy Ghost, there brings out. It is God quoting His own word to bring out the original thought contained in it. If we read the Psalm without the divine explanation, we should say that there was but one

speaker throughout it; when we see the bearing of the quotation in Hebrews 1, we learn that there are two. From verses 1-23 is the utterance of the One, the afflicted One; from verse 24 to the end is the response of the other; and from Hebrews we learn that both the one and the other are the Lord God of hosts. "I said, O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days," are the words of entreaty from Jehovah as man, addressing the Lord in heaven. "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands," etc., are the words of Jehovah in heaven in response to Jehovah on earth, acknowledging that the afflicted One who cries, is indeed the Creator of the universe. Without the quotation in the Hebrews we never should have guessed this. With it, all is clear, and the amazing grace and real humiliation of the Lord Jesus Christ is brought out to us.

For, let us remark, He is not here called God's Son, but Jehovah Himself. God witnesses of it; God addresses Him as such. He who will not give His glory to another, here admits the eternal existence and creative power of the virgin's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not turned to His works to see who He must be; we stand by and listen to Jehovah's own statement to Him, and hear the wonderful announcement that the afflicted One upon earth is really Jehovah of hosts. A mystery which none can solve, we have here revealed; but though an insoluble mystery, it is a simple truth which we must accept. To explain it is beyond our power; to accept it is the duty of every creature. God owns Him to be God, who could say in truth, "O My God."

Thus in this Psalm we have the divine and human natures of the Lord Jesus distinctly proclaimed. Distinct they are from one another, but united in one Person; for the One who tells out His affliction, is declared on the highest authority to be the self-existing One. His deity none but God could declare, for who besides God could reveal His eternal existence? His manhood, with death before Him, He sets forth. One sees the propriety of this, and it is just what we meet with in Hebrews. In chapter 1 God affirms His deity, and in chapter 2 Christ bears witness to His own humanity. In the former chapter God tells us about His Son, for God alone could pronounce as to His divine essence. In the latter, He speaks in the quotations to God, and thus gives evidence of the reality of His human nature.

He looks forward to death in this Psalm as we have seen in others also. But here we must mark a great difference. In Psalm 16 we see Him looking to be brought up out of death; in Psalm 40 we learn that He has been delivered - raised up from the dead. But here, while we have Him contemplating death, we have nothing from Him about His future - nothing about resurrection. Viewed as a man we can see the reason for this. Man's proper portion is an earth; so the earthly hopes, the earthly blessings, are all that we have here depicted - those hopes and blessings of which death deprives all those over whom it has power. Viewed as Jehovah, we can see another reason for this. Jehovah abides; therefore resurrection would be quite out of place in a Psalm which sets forth Christ's deity. As man, as Messiah, we have the Lord brought before us. "Thou hast lifted Me up," refers to His Messiahship. Thou hast "cast Me down," shows what He has to expect in accordance with Daniel's prediction, to be cut off, and to have nothing (Dan. 9:26, margin).

What this was to Him we now get set forth. "My days are like a shadow that declineth" (lit., stretched out to nearly its full length); "and I am" (or shall be) "withered like grass." Yet He had not reached the full term allotted to man upon earth, for He adds, "He weakened My strength in the

way; He shortened My days"; and turning to Jehovah, cries, "O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days." With His feelings as a man we are thus made acquainted, for, really a man, He could feel, and did feel, all that man, as man, should feel under the circumstances in which He was placed in grace to us. A sinner dreads death because of the consequences to him after it. A saint may rejoice because of what is beyond it. But man, as man, can only view it as the Lord here does - the cutting off of His days - akin to Hezekiah's feelings, who expressed himself in a similar manner (Isa. 38:10).

We read in Phil. 2:7 that the Lord Jesus made Himself of no reputation (or, emptied Himself), and humbled Himself; the former was manifested in His becoming a man, as a servant subject to God; the latter was displayed in His submitting to death - the death of the cross. Both of these, but especially the first, are exemplified in this Psalm. He emptied Himself - how truly, how fully. Though He is the Lord Jehovah, of whose creative and sustaining power the universe bears witness, He was found as a man upon earth, crying in His affliction to Jehovah. All man's feelings He could and did enter into; and the effect of intense mental suffering, the Word tells us, He learned by experience (Luke 22:44).

Here He describes how His affliction acted on His bodily frame (vv. 3-5), a condition to which man may be subject - to be pitied, yet not to be wondered at; but when it is of the Lord Himself that we read it, we may wonder indeed. Added to all this, He was reproached by His enemies, who were banded together against Him (v. 8). Nothing then is before Him but death, and that the death of the cross; for though atonement is not the subject of which the Psalm treats, the reason why He was to be cut off is stated (v. 10). Thus He emptied Himself, and He humbled Himself. He stooped to be a man, and was to die the death of the meanest of men. To this He here looks forward, not as a contingency, but as a certainty.

Thus feeling about it as none but a man could feel, His perfection as man appears in a twofold way. He receives it all as from Jehovah, and is occupied with God's thoughts about the future, as regards the earth, Zion, and the world.

He must die, but it is God who takes Him away (v. 24). He must pass off this scene by His enemies persecuting Him to death, but He regards this as Jehovah's doing (v. 10). Facing death as He here does, He speaks, as has been observed, of nothing about Himself beyond it. Seen upon earth once, when He entered death He passed off it, and the world saw Him no more. "Withered like grass." Born into this world a king (Luke 2:11), saluted as such in His infancy (Matt. 2), proclaimed as such by the multitude on His public entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:38; Matt. 21:5), death seems to have cut short all hopes founded on His Messiahship (Luke 24:21), and effectually to have barred against Him the way to the throne. "Cut off, having nothing," fitly described Him.

Perfect as a man, He is not engrossed with this, but looks forward to what saints will witness and enjoy upon earth after His decease. Death then is not here contemplated for those who shall witness what He describes, and enjoy what He predicts. "I am withered like grass," He says of Himself. "But Thou, O LORD, shalt endure forever; and Thy remembrance [or memorial] unto all generations," is His statement about the Lord God of hosts. This at once introduces a sketch of God's plans about Zion, the earth, the destitute, the world, and all who belong to it.

What are those plans upon which He can dwell, to be carried out after His decease? They are far-reaching and comprehensive. The heathen and all the kings of the earth will be concerned in them. Nations and kingdoms will find that they affect them. Zion must be rebuilt, her desolate condition must be reversed, and the Lord must appear in His glory. Then too will it be seen that Jehovah regards the prayer of the destitute, and does not despise their prayer; for the afflicted, persecuted remnant of His people shall rest again finally in their land and in Jerusalem.

But how can this be secured if the enemies of the righteous can make war against them upon earth, and even Messiah Himself be cut off? Upon what ground can they hope that objects and purposes so opposed to this world's interests can ever triumph and be made good? Can righteousness ever gain the ascendancy in a sphere where self-interest is the ruling passion, and hostility to God the prevailing feature? What answer does the Psalm make to this? It does give a complete answer, and what an answer it surely is! All the future rests upon Jehovah's nature and character; "Thou, O LORD, shalt endure forever." Upon this is based by the afflicted One the certainty of the fulfillment of the Word.

Generations may pass, but Jehovah abides. Man goes away, but God never changes. To Him then He looks to fulfill all the prophecies about Zion and the world. He, as a man, would be cut off, but Zion's hopes would not fail, for Jehovah ever remains. Let the wicked then triumph as they may - let Satan seem all-powerful - Jehovah's nature assures the saints that not one of His words shall fail of its accomplishment. Of men we may have to speak in the past; as regards their connection with earth, "they have been." Of Jehovah we can always speak in the present - "He is." If we think of the future - "He will be." Therefore He will fulfill His Word. Upon, this, His eternal existence, as a rock which time cannot disintegrate, nor the waves of man's opposition uproot, earth's future and Zion's sure blessing can and do rest. What ground this is to take up! He who has pledged His Word will never pass away. So His purpose, who is ever-existing and almighty, shall assuredly be established. This is a consideration full of comfort for the godly, but most solemn for the ungodly.

On Jehovah's immutability and nature His people can lean; and to point this out as equally true for future generations, these words were written (vv. 17-20). Solemn as this consideration surely is, it becomes intensely solemn when we learn who that One is who cries in His affliction, and speaks of the malice of His enemies. He is Jehovah Himself, as we have seen; and God answers His appeal by declaring

(that all may be acquainted with it) His eternal existence, and the mighty power of Him whom man despised and even abhorred. Heaven and earth may pass away, but He is, and His years have no end.

What then must those expect who, having crucified Him, refused afterward to believe on Him? What too must those have before them who persistently stand out against Him? Where He has been dishonored, there will He act in power; and Jerusalem, which witnessed His crucifixion, will rejoice in the exercise of His goodness and avenging power. What will His enemies then receive? On this the Psalm is silent, being beyond its scope. The portion of the children of His servants, a portion to be enjoyed upon earth, it does relate: "The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before Thee." But of nothing beyond earth does it take cognizance. What a change will then take place! He died; His enemies survived. He will reappear in power and

great glory; the children of His servants will rejoice and be blest, while His enemies will be - where? Other scriptures tell us their then condition, and their future portion (Rev. 19:21; 20:5, 12-15).

Balaam, looking forward to the future, exclaimed, "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!" He asked a question which was not given to him to answer. To us the answer has been made known.

None of those who now believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will be living upon the earth when He comes to reign; they were caught up previously to meet Him in the air, and will come with Him and behold from above the afflicted One in heavenly glory and power (1 Thess. 4:17; Zech. 14:5; Rev. 19:14).

Will those then left behind on earth after the Church has been removed behold these things of which the Psalm speaks? Some will, but none, we believe, will be among that number, who, once having had the offer of God's grace, have resisted it. For of all such, who shall be on earth when He returns to it in power, we read, they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. 1:9, 10; 2:12). Will such have another chance? Scripture is clear. Those who share not in the first resurrection at the commencement of His reign, will only be raised up for judgment at its close.

There is a resurrection unto life, which will be a completed act when He begins to reign. There will be a resurrection unto judgment for the ungodly dead at the close of it (Rev. 20:4, 5, 12, 13). All who share not in the former must have to do with the latter; and the lake of fire, the second death, must be their portion forever and ever.

This solemn question having been answered so clearly from the Word, why should any, who have the opportunity of sharing in the portion of God's saints, exclude themselves from it? The number of the heavenly saints is still incomplete; the house furnished for the feast is not yet full; and the Lord, by His servants, is still beseeching souls to enter while there is room.

Messianic Psalms: God's King: Psalm 110

Two aspects of the Lord's death, as delineated in the Psalms, we have briefly looked at; namely, Messiah cut off and having nothing (102); and the Lord making atonement, and its results (22). His resurrection, looked forward to in Psalm 16, is regarded as an accomplished fact in Psalm 40, and His service consequent on it is predicted in Psalm 22. Now we have a further step in God's revelation about His King, and we learn where He is at present. For, while Psalm 22 takes us back in thought to the past and onward to the future—that is, what has happened and what will happen on this globe—Psalm 110 speaks only of the present and future, and so takes us upward in thought to the Lord's present place at Jehovah's right hand in heaven.

Accustomed, as many perhaps have been, to read the Psalms as isolated compositions, complete each one in itself, they may not have noticed what every student of the Word should mark—that the book is not a collection of odes strung together haphazardly, without reason or method. Each Psalm has its place in relation to the whole collection, from which, if it were displaced, the symmetry of this divinely ordered book would be marred, and the connecting thread perhaps broken. We may not be able in all cases to trace the connection, but attention to the order and subjects of the different books of the volume (for the whole collection is divided in the original into five books: 141; 4272; 7389; 90106; 107150) and to many of the psalms in these different books, reveals a plan and an arrangement which has not, perhaps, been commonly suspected. By whom the collection was thus arranged, we are not informed; nor do we know by whom each psalm was composed.

In places we meet with a series of psalms taking up a certain line; for example, 4448; 93100; 120134. At other times we have an arrangement inverting what would have seemed the natural order of the subjects, as where psalms celebrating the Lord's triumphs precede those which make especial mention of His sufferings and death; for example, 21 and 22; 68 and 69; 93100 and 102. In the case of the Psalm before us, we have an example of a different class, its subject being the proper sequel to the thoughts brought out in Psalm 109. In the former we read of the Lord being persecuted by Judas, whose punishment is then predicted. In Psalm 110 we meet with God's answer to man's opposition to His own well beloved Son. Peter applies Psalm 109:8 to Judas, in Acts 1, though others besides him are clearly spoken of as persecuting the righteous One (vv. 20, 25). The same Apostle quotes Psalm 110 in Acts 2 as prophetic of the Lord Jesus, to whom alone it can be applied.

On different occasions in the New Testament is this Psalm applied to the Lord. The Jews evidently owned that it did speak of the Messiah, for when the Lord appealed to its language as pointing to the irresistible conclusion that the Christ must be greater than David, though descended from him after the flesh, His reference to it met with no disclaimer on their part (Matt. 22:42-46). On the day of Pentecost, Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, applied it to the Lord Jesus, lately crucified, and then risen and ascended (Acts 2:34-36). Paul, when writing to the Hebrews, makes great use of it in reference to the Lord's Person (1:13), His work (10:12, 13), and His present service (5:6; 6:20;

7:17, 21, 28). Of Him then, and of Him alone, it speaks; for who, besides Him, could sit on Jehovah's throne?

Here should be noticed a feature different from any met with in the Psalms already taken up. In each of them the Lord is introduced as a speaker, and in two of them (16, 22) He is the only one. Here He is silent. Not a word, not a whisper, do we read of, that escapes His lips-in perfect keeping with the character of the Psalm, and the place the Lord is here described as occupying. It was fitting that, as Man in humiliation, He should speak to God. It becomes man to do so. It is right that His exaltation should be proclaimed by Jehovah. So God addresses Him, gives Him His place, and by an oath confirms to Him an everlasting priesthood. But, though the Lord Jesus is silent throughout the Psalm, others are not. David, by the Spirit, speaks of Him and to Him (57; 24). The propriety of this we can all see. "God also hath highly exalted Him" (Phil. 2:9); therefore He reveals it, and men should own it, learning from God, through His Word, what is the only suited place now, in the whole universe, for Him who hung on the cross.

What an answer this is to men's treatment of Christ! They crucified the Lord of glory; Jehovah has placed Him at His side. The One rejected by the world occupies the highest place in heavenly glory. His session there proclaims that He is not an angel (Heb. 1:13). He is, He must be, Jehovah, the Eternal One; for of none but Him who is God could it be written, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." This is a startling fact in more ways than one, for it tells us of His Person, of His work, and of God's counsels.

His Person as divine •is thus clearly announced, for no mere creature could ever fill such a place. God will not give His glory to another. No creature could ever sit there by divine appointment. On earth, as Psalm 109 depicts, He was poor and needy, the sport of men, the object on which they vented their rage, and one to whom they pointed with the finger of scorn. But no place is too high for Him to fill, who was cradled in a manger, and whose body was laid in that rock hewn tomb. As God, of course nothing could be added to Him; He only returned to the glory He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5). As man, He is where man never was before, and Peter quotes this Psalm when speaking of Him as man (Acts 2:34-36). God, therefore, and Man, He is. Were He not God, He could not be there. But He who is Man is there-the Man Christ Jesus, made Lord and Christ. As Son of God from all eternity, He sits at the Father's right hand; as man, He has been exalted by the right hand of God (Acts 2:33).

As to His atoning work, Paul shows us how this Psalm applies. The Lord has sat down; therefore all ministry at the altar and before the mercy seat with His blood has ended. His position, now seated, declares this, in contrast to the daily standing of the priests at their ministrations in the tabernacle, offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which could never take away sins. But Christ "after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever [for a continuance] sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Heb. 10:12-14. God raised Him from the dead, in token that He accepted Him as the sacrifice; He has sat down, the proof that it has done all that was required. No man, indeed, has seen Him in this position; but Scripture reveals it to us for the joy of our hearts and the establishment of our souls.

3) His present place tells us also of God's counsels. They are unchangeable. The princes of this world in their ignorance crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8; Acts 3:17). God has placed Him by

His side, a testimony, indeed, as we have seen, to His Person and to His work-a witness also of the sure accomplishment of the divine counsels. For seated there, until His enemies be made His footstool, tells us for what He waits, a fact needful for all to be acquainted with; for, though absent from the earth for a time, He will yet be firmly established in the kingdom, and rule all nations with a rod of iron. Seated there by God's decree, it is clear that Jehovah has espoused His cause, and as this verse tells us, will make good His dominion. God will one day make His enemies His footstool. Do men really believe this? Is the truth of the Lord's present place one to which men in their hearts subscribe?

To be indifferent to Christ argues indifference to God and to His counsels; to be unconcerned about the Lord Jesus must be folly; to oppose Him must be madness. Jehovah has publicly declared that He will make His enemies His footstool. It is not then a kingdom simply that God promises to Him-a dominion which none subject to it can overturn- but that those who have refused to acknowledge Him, and will forever remain opposed to Him in heart, must one day be completely subject to His sway-made His footstool. How complete will be their subjection then! Divine power will make the knee to bend, when the heart has obstinately refused to bow under a sense of His grace. For if such is His present place and future prospect, now at God's right hand, and by and by to be installed in His own kingdom by divine power, what must be His grace and love which moved Him, in obedience to His Father's wish, to become a man, to die for sinners. It is as we learn the excellence of His Person that we discover more of the greatness of His grace.

"From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool" is the comment of the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, as inspired by the Holy Spirit. From the Psalm we learn God's mind, from the Hebrews the Lord's expectation. Thus at the earliest moment, as it were, after He whom man had rejected had been accepted by God on high, was the unchanging purpose of the divine mind, with respect to the kingdom, declared. His enemies will be made His footstool. Jehovah will do this for Him. With this stated at the outset, the Psalm proceeds to set forth some features characteristic of that time, showing that all on earth even will not be subject at heart, though all must outwardly acknowledge His sway. "The LORD shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies." Then Zion will be the seat of government, and in the midst of His enemies will the Lord rule. Observe, we read nothing of the extermination of all His enemies, for He will rule in their midst. Blessing there will be in that day-outward blessing for all-yet some will remain unchanged in heart, and be fitly described as His enemies.

It is true, all acts of evil will summarily be dealt with, but an iron hand will be required to keep in check man's otherwise unruly will. "Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies" gives us a clue to the condition of things that will then be in existence on earth. In conformity with this, we read elsewhere of the children of the stranger yielding feigned obedience (Psalm 18:44; 66:3, margin), and are told of the great outbreak of evil after the thousand years shall have run their course, when the devil will be let loose to deceive the nations. Man's heart, unless acted on by grace, will be just what it is now, when the Lord reigns, though it will lack the power, and in a great measure the opportunity, of doing

as it pleases. To this, the dark side, there is however, a bright one. His people (for He will have one) will be willing in the day of His power, offering themselves willingly for His work, as some of the children of Israel did in the day of Sisera's defeat. These He will make use of, wherewith to

chastise His and their enemies (Zech. 12:4-8; 9:13; Mic. 5:8, 9), endowed as they will then be with the energy of youth.

4) In connection with the conquest to be effected by His people, something further is related, carrying us back in thought to the days of Abraham, the conqueror of the northern power of that day, which, with confederate kings, invaded the land of Canaan and carried Lot captive. Returning from the smiting of the kings (for the term in Hebrew, as well as in Greek, does not of necessity mean slaughter), Melchizedek, King of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met him with bread and wine (that is, with what sustains and gives joy) and blessed him (Gen. 14:18-20). In this Psalm, in which we have Israel conquering under Christ, we meet for the first time again with a notice of such a priesthood, conferred, we read, on the Lord Jesus, by the oath of God, and which will be exercised in the day of His power after the example of Melchizedek in the days of Abraham, who blessed Abraham, and blessed also the Most High God, thus taking a middle place between them, as surely He who is both God and man can take between Jehovah and Israel, Abraham's offspring. After Abraham's victory, Melchizedek thus met him. After His people shall be willing in the day of His power, will the Lord, priest on His throne, be seen in the exercise of the Melchizedek character of priesthood.

The Aaronic character of priesthood has to do with the sanctuary, the Melchizedek character with the kingdom. The Psalm, however, speaks not of the Melchizedek character, but of the Melchizedek order of priesthood; nor does it speak of it as a future event, but as an established thing. "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." So, while the history of Genesis 14 throws light on the abrupt mention of the Melchizedek priesthood in this Psalm, the epistle to the Hebrews explains to us the force of the word "order" as used here in connection with it. The Lord's enemies subdued, His people victorious, He, priest on His throne, will bless them, the counsel of peace being between Jehovah and Himself (Zech. 6:13). Now God's people need the exercise of a priesthood Aaronic in character, but Melchizedek in order; then, resting under His protection, all wilderness troubles over, all conflicts ended, like Abraham returning with the spoil, Israel will be able to enjoy the Melchizedek character of His priesthood, with which He will then manifest that He has been clothed by divine appointment.

But will this condition of things endure? The word "order" suggests its continuance, for, as Melchizedek had no successor, neither will the Lord. He "abideth a priest continually" is the divine comment on Melchizedek. He "hath an unchangeable priesthood" is the divine statement about the Lord. Priest after that order implies no successor - a pledge of abiding blessing for Israel - a word of comfort too for God's people now, who, while needing a priesthood to be exercised on their behalf, Aaronic in character, need also one that cannot fail; in other words, one after the order of Melchizedek. The little word "order" in connection with Melchizedek (whether in the sanctuary or on the throne) suggests a priesthood that does not terminate by the appointment of a successor, thus insuring to those concerned in it all the blessing and comfort of a settled order, and of an intransmissible office.

His conquests having been declared, and His ruling among His enemies foretold, we read now of judgments to be meted out to the rebels in arms against God's authority. Of the wrath of Him who sits at God's right hand, Psalm 2 has made mention; of the manifestation of that wrath, this Psalm gives example (v. 5). And since it forms part of the fifth book of the volume, and the setting up of

the kingdom and power has been celebrated in the fourth (95100), we can understand why the past tense is used when these judgments are spoken of.

The psalmist recounts what God did for His Son after His rejection by the world, and what Christ has done, to whom the kingdom has been given. "The Lord at Thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the heathen [nations], He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; He shall wound the heads over many countries." This refers, perhaps, to Rev. 19:19-21. With mighty power, according to the standpoint of this Psalm, He has been seen to be endowed; for this divine composition views God's counsels as in process of fulfillment. We too read it as partly fulfilled. Its place, however, in the volume, as well as its language, contemplates a further development, before the world, of God's plan than can be effected while the Church is still down here. The conqueror, according to the terms used, has gone forth in power, and His people are willing in the day, which they here own has at last dawned upon earth, that of His power. All has not yet been done which must be done to clear the earth of unruly rebels. But He has taken that work in hand, and is effecting it surely. So, as engaged in it, we learn of His continued dependence on God, who has given such proof of His invincible might. "He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall He lift up the head."

What a contrast the close of this Psalm presents to the beginning, only to be understood and the two ends to be harmonized, as we bow to the mystery of His Person, perfect God and perfect Man, Immanuel, by whom all God's purposes about the universe will yet be made good!

Messianic Psalms: God's King: Psalm 16

The birth of the King having been announced in Psalm 2, we have next to retrace His footsteps as He walked upon earth as a man. Power to be exercised by Him as God's King seems only natural and right, but a position of lowly dependence is one which man would never have assigned to Him. Yet this was the place He took when upon earth, who will one day rule all nations with a rod of iron; for He was to show what Adam had failed to exhibit—the proper character and position of the lowest in rank of God's intelligent creatures, called by Him, man.

Perfect God and perfect man, whatever be the relative position He occupies, in it He is perfect.

As man on earth, He entered fully into His place, and acted throughout as befits the creature. And this we have traced out to us in the Word, not only in those books which recount His history, but in the Psalms and prophets, which mark out beforehand the road appointed Him to traverse. Among the Psalms which describe Him upon earth, Psalm 16 must be included. Twice in the Acts do we find it quoted (2:25-28; 13:35), and both times it is expressly applied to Christ. Peter, taking up the question of David's authorship, points out that he wrote not of himself, but of another. The Psalm is a psalm of David, but the hope it expresses belongs to a Person very different from the youngest son of Jesse. David's sepulcher, existing at that day, proved he did not write of himself. "He is both dead and buried," is all that the Apostle could say of him. He died, was buried, and is risen, is the testimony which he bore to Christ. "David speaketh concerning Him," is the language of the Spirit by Peter, with reference to His own words by David. At Antioch, in Pisidia, Paul, addressing a mixed company of Jews and Greeks, and anticipating the objection that might be raised against the Messiahship of Jesus, because He had died, quoted this Psalm, to show that His resurrection was predicted. David saw corruption, but He whom God raised again saw no corruption. Thus at Jerusalem and again at Antioch, it was clearly shown that Psalm 16 had reference to another than the writer—even to David's Son, who is also David's Lord.

Glancing over it, we may see that only one speaker is introduced throughout it. In Psalm 2 we had three; here we have but one, so He, whose hope it expresses at the close, is the same whose dependence it declares at the beginning; for while part of the Psalm any saint might take up, whose walk was conformed to the standard it describes, One only has ever been upon earth who could apply it all to Himself. Enoch and Elijah can tell of a road to heaven, which passes not through the gates of death; but none of God's saints who have entered death, have passed through it without their bodies being subjected to corruption. For observe, the Psalm speaks not of the state and portion of the unclothed spirit, but of the reunion of body and soul after each should go to their respective places—the former to the grave, the latter to hell, or hades (Sheol). Death, however, is here only in prospect, the walk which preceded it being the subject of the Spirit's description.

Like a lake whose surface is unruffled by the least breath of any disturbing element, reflecting the very color and calmness of the heavens above it, disclosing too, beauties in its depths, a bright shining object, at once attractive and soothing—such is the character of our blessed Lord and

Master as brought out to us in this Psalm, in which we mark no trace of the opposition that He met with from men, nor of the unevenness of the road over which He journeyed. With one exception (v. 4) there is nothing here to intimate the presence on earth of a will which did not, like His, bow to that of God. It is One, as He walked with God, whose footsteps we have here delineated, and just what we meet with elsewhere in the Word, so useful to us who are often so dull of comprehension; we have but one aspect of the Lord's work upon earth given to us in this Psalm to contemplate. The full picture, with every feature in harmony, we get in the gospels, while different aspects of His life are brought before us in the Old Testament scriptures. The principle of His walk, the character of His service, the treatment He experienced, the grace and gentleness which He manifested—all these blended together in the gospels are described particularly and separately by the prophets who lived before the cross. So, while noting His perfection throughout, we may study for our profit the different features of His character, who is both God and man, our Savior and our Lord.

To turn now to the Psalm before us, which gives us the principles of His walk before God—it begins with declaring His dependence, and ends with expressing His confidence. "Preserve Me, O God," is the first utterance. "Thou wilt show Me the path of life," is the closing expression of confidence. How fully then He took the place of a creature, who should ever be dependent upon the Creator. To be as gods, was the bait held out but too successfully to Eve in the garden of Eden; the refusal to leave the path of dependence upon God, characterized the second Man when tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Yet all the while He was God. The stormy sea obeyed His behest, and was stilled; fishes were brought in abundance to Peter's net, and one fish brought Him the exact sum demanded as tribute from the disciple and his Master; the winds too dropped at His word; the devils owned His authority; and death released its grasp, when He bade Lazarus to come forth. Power then He had; all nature obeyed His bidding, who took so dependent a place as to say, "Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee do I put My trust." Is it degrading for a man to own himself dependent on a superior being? Is independence of God what the creature may desire? These questions receive a complete answer from the acts of God's Son down here. He was as a creature dependent, and throughout He remained so.

His dependence affirmed, His associates are next described—"My goodness extendeth not to Thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom [in them, not in whom] is all My delight." A position of isolation was not that designed by God for man. Separation from evil doers is to characterize His saints (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5; Titus 3:10; Jas. 4:4); but a misanthropic spirit was never the result of divine teaching, nor is a pharisaic standard of moral fitness one upon which God looks with approval. As man, the Lord owns a distance between Himself and God. "My goodness extendeth not to Thee." And though the only Man, who from His own holiness might have withdrawn Himself from contact with sinners, He was found in their company, and tells us in the Psalm that in them was all His delight. Man • in nature loves the company of the great, and those best known to fame. The Lord Jesus found His delight in the saints (those separated to God) and in the excellent (those obedient to the Word). With others, just mentioned in verse 4, He could have no communion. On earth for God, with those who were on God's side, He could and did consort. Publicans, as Levi and Zacchaeus; sinners, as the woman of John 4; those who had been demoniacally possessed, as Mary Magdalene and the man of Gadara, found themselves at home in His presence. Those from whom a Pharisee would have studiously kept aloof, He allowed to approach (Luke 7). It was this which so puzzled Simon the Pharisee. He thought he knew much

about that woman, but the Lord showed that He knew, more, and allowed her to touch His feet, and accepted as personal service the expression of her heart's deep thankfulness. With publicans and sinners He would eat; He abode in the house of Zacchaeus, and passed two days with the Samaritans of Sychar. The "friend of publicans and sinners," men in derision called Him who associated with the saints and with the excellent. From John's disciples He chose some of His own—those who having been baptized of John in Jordan, confessing their sins, owned that a standing before God on the ground of their own righteousness was a hopeless thing. What then was the reason of this action on His part, so unaccountable to many about Him? The excellent were those who confessed they had sinned; the saints were such as turned from their former ways to follow the Shepherd of the flock. When God made a decree for the waters of the sea, when He appointed the foundations of the earth, the delights of Wisdom were with the sons of men as distinguished from the angelic creation (Prov. 8:31). The fall of man came, and the Lord subsequently appeared upon earth. Then we find it was no longer simply a question between men and angels, but between two different classes of men, the self-righteous and impenitent on the one hand, and the repentant sinners on the other. Unchanged was His delight in men, but manifested under new circumstances. "The saints that are in the earth, and... the excellent," were the classes that He singled out, and drew around Himself. What grace does this bring into notice! Holy, harmless, undefiled Himself, the poor penitents and the sin-burdened souls could find a ready welcome from Him. Men called them publicans and sinners; He calls them saints and excellent. The former expressed what they thought of them; see how God regarded them; so it was fitting that, when addressing God, by such terms should He describe them. What joy to souls, when drawn by grace to Christ, to know God thus regards them, and that He can thus describe them. How entirely their past sinfulness is put out of sight, and how clearly their present character in God's eyes is kept in view. Saints and excellent, such were His companions; such are those with whom forever He will be associated. At the outset of His ministry such were found in His company; at the close of His life, one such was with Him, cheered by the dying words of the Savior of sinners, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

His associates having been described, we next learn how He viewed His appointed path. And here we must surely feel, that great indeed is the distance between us and Him, though by grace partakers of the divine nature, and having Him for our life. The description of His associates tells us of His grace; what follows speaks of His perfectness. Others had turned away from God to seek satisfaction from unhallowed sources (v. 4); He owned that Jehovah was the portion of His inheritance and of His cup, and accepted what God provided. Circumstances, whatever they might be, He regarded as ordered by God, in whom He found His portion which, therefore, was unfailing and unchanging. He too maintained His lot. Able by His presence to overawe souls, and by His word to control the course and actions of demons, He did not assert His rights, but left it to Jehovah to maintain His lot. How truly, how fully, He was the dependent One, though alone of men He could say, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." Isa. 50:3. Thus, leaving all in Jehovah's hands to provide for Him - what Adam failed to do—He could say, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." No garden of Eden, as Adam had, was His home upon earth, to delight Himself in the abounding fruits of the Creator's beneficence and power. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, possessing not, as He ministered to others, what the foxes and birds could count upon as their own, a fixed resting place for His head (Matt. 8:20), and even indebted at times to godly women for the supply of His bodily

wants (Luke 8:3), His experience of Jehovah's providential care He has left on record for His people's instruction.

Meek, He was also lowly; for in nothing would He be independent of Jehovah, though He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. From His infancy it was noticed that He was filled with wisdom; as He grew up, we learn that He increased in wisdom (Luke 2:40, 52); and when He appeared as a teacher among His countrymen, knowing Him as a carpenter, and believing Him to be the son of a carpenter, they inquired in astonishment, from whence did He derive it all? (Luke 4:22; Mark 6:2; John 6:42.) He tells us in this Psalm, that the source of strength for Him as a man was the fountain of knowledge for Him likewise (v. 7). Thus He blessed the Lord who bestowed it; and His will being in full harmony with God's mind, when others were asleep His reins instructed Him.

Dependent, meek, lowly, teachable, upon that from which man shrinks He could look unmoved. To death, man's natural end since the fall, He who was sinless looks forward. Having set Jehovah always before Him, He would not be moved; for the One who had upheld Him in life, would bring Him through death; nay, more than that, would not leave Him for any time in it; for God's presence was the goal to which, as man, He was journeying. Elsewhere we find Him contemplating death as that which cuts short all connection with earth (Psa. 102); here He views it as that which lay in His road to God's presence, the aspect in which God's saints can now regard it likewise. Earth is not the only stage on which men will move; so death does not terminate man's existence, nor cut short the saints' enjoyment. It is the portal to another sphere, and, for those who have a portion in heaven, a door to endless joy. Beyond death then He here looked. To be in God's presence was His desire; for the path of life for Him, as for millions of God's saints, lay through the gates of death. Pleasures for evermore He desired, and He points out where they can be enjoyed. How truly He knew man's place upon earth, and shared in the hopes and joys of God's saints. Life beyond death, in the fullest joy, because in God's presence, and there to abide forever, is the closing thought of the Psalm. Across the brief period of time, to that which has for us a beginning, but has no end, called eternity, are we here in thought conducted; from a scene ever changing to God's presence, where all is stable and abiding, our eyes are now turned; the portion indeed of God's heavenly saints, but the portion of His well-beloved Son likewise, who, born into this world, went through it as a man, and passed out of it by death.

Had men according to their own wisdom undertaken to track out the Lord's path here below, how different would their accounts of it have been from what we have here! Each might have seen Him through the medium of their own thoughts, and at best have recorded their impressions about Him; but here we have His own thoughts and feelings laid bare by Himself. And surely, as we take in what He expresses in this Psalm we get a better understanding of the value and character of the gift which He gave to His own just before departing out of this world to go to the Father- "My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27). Here, in a degree unequaled, we have that peace portrayed, and may learn how to share in it, as in Col. 3:15 we are exhorted to let it rule in our hearts. For "the peace of God" we should doubtless there read, the "peace of Christ." Thus we get mirrored in the Word a walk of subjection to God, as exemplified in the Son of the Highest. Far, far, surely most will admit that they walk behind Him who is our life; and often have not the children of God had experience of just the opposite to that peace which He so fully enjoyed, from failing to learn of Him, in whom-

"There only could God fully trace
A life divine below."

Messianic Psalms: God's King: Psalm 2

There are two great lines of truth in the sacred writings, which, for distinction's sake, may be called Church truth and Kingdom truth. The first is only met with in the New Testament; the second is found throughout the Bible. The former tells us of God's counsels about the Lord Jesus Christ, and about His body, which is also His bride; the latter announces God's settled determination about the government of this world by the Man of His choice. With both, the incarnation and the cross are intimately connected. As man, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, but only after His resurrection and ascension was the body formed. (Eph. 1:22, 23.) As man, too, all government of this world will be placed in His hand whom God has raised up from the dead. Thus, the two great features of the first Adam's history before the fall will be found reproduced in the last Adam, the possession of a bride, and the sovereign authority over the earth. The first Adam, untried and unfallen, possessed the one and exercised the other; the last Adam, tried in every way possible, and proved to be obedient to God's Word, will rejoice in the former, and wield with an iron rod the latter.

As man, according to Psalm 8, will the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God, blessed for evermore (Rom. 9:5), take the kingdom and rule. As to His divine essence, He is God; as to His Person, He is the Son of God; and as to His nature, He is both divine and human. As God, He now sits where none but God could, on the Father's throne (Rev. 3:21). As Son of man He will sit on His own throne. He occupies now His place on the former. He will by-and-by occupy His place on the latter. About this it is that our Psalm speaks.

When Adam first trod upon this earth, no will was known upon it but God's - every creature obeyed Him - for acknowledging the authority of man (Gen. 2:19, 20), placed over them by God, they bowed to the Creator's will. When the Lord entered the world, God's authority was for the most part ignored, and will one day be openly defied (Rev. 17:14). Between God's counsels and the world's desires there is now a wide divergence, as this Psalm, in which we are introduced to both of them, makes plain. All appears in turmoil on earth, so different from that quiet scene in Eden, where each animal passed in review before Adam, and God's creatures received their several names from the man formed to rule over this earth. Here, on the contrary, we have the heathen raging, people imagining a vain thing, nationalities and races alike disturbed, and rulers of all grades disquieted, at the thought of subjection to God's will. Man, created in the image of God, is found rising up against His authority. What a picture does this present of the insubordination of those who ought, from their place upon earth, to have set an example to the whole universe of unhesitating obedience to the Creator's arrangements! Centuries have rolled by since Adam and Eve were in the garden, and each one tells its own tale of God's goodness and mercy to His creatures, and of His unremitting thoughtfulness for all that they require. Doing good, giving rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling men's hearts with food and gladness, is the simple recital of the Creator's beneficence (Acts 14:17); and yet commotion is witnessed upon earth in opposition to the development of His counsels. With different aims for the most part, divided generally by jealousies and conflicting interests, on one point nations can unite; to ward off one

issue they can deliberate together. What is it that binds them in one common accord - what common danger do they wish to avert? They take counsel against Jehovah, and against His Messiah. "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." God's Word strips off all disguise, and exposes in its nakedness the wickedness of their design. Jehovah and His Anointed, the Christ, are on the one side, and the powers of the world are arrayed upon the other. It is this which can so deeply stir hearts, and bind by the ties of common interests both nationalities and dynasties.

Will they succeed in their efforts? The Psalm answers the question; but answering it before ever the struggle began, makes manifest God's foreknowledge, as well as His unalterable intention. The confederacy could not be formed till God's counsels had begun to develop themselves, but the plans of men are here foretold to warn the world to be wise in time. On earth there may be disturbance - above, all is calm. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." What a contrast does this present to the impotent rage of God's rebellious creatures. He sits in heaven, and laughs at it. The settled determination of the Almighty can no more be overturned than the throne of God itself. He sits, while below Him men are in commotion. The term used suggests the immutability of His counsels, so that if men cannot restrain His actions, they must bend before the might of His power (v. 5).

We are turned then from the council chamber of men to hear what God thinks of it all. He laughs them to scorn; for what can might, intelligence, wit, or combination effect, if opposed to God's settled purpose? Men plot and counterplot, often the sport of circumstances, never really the controllers of them, and He who sits on the throne on high laughs at the machinations of mortals. Could the Creator be diverted from His long-prepared plan by the rage and opposition of men, He would not be God, and we could put no confidence in His Word. But He is God; therefore, His purpose is unchangeable. He is Jehovah; therefore, His word is unalterable; and on it we can plant our feet, conscious of the stability of our ground. So, to all men's projects about the government of this world, God has but one answer, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." Whatever else may pass away, this word of our God shall stand forever, a comfort to His people, that neither time nor the world's opposition can produce even a modification of His Word.

Observe the language, "My King," "My holy hill." God appoints the King, and He has a place on earth from which He will never be dislodged. Little thought of by many is that hill of Zion, so long covered with ruins and the remains of former grandeur, but it is God's holy hill still, and He here claims it for Himself. God then, whom men will at a future day attempt to exclude from His own world, has a place on earth which He calls His own, and a King who shall one day be firmly seated thereon. Should not this arrest attention and arouse inquiry? Are men satisfied with the present arrangement of things upon earth? Clearly God is not satisfied, for what room is there in the partition of earth by man for the King to have a place, whom God here calls His own? Originally, God set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel (Deut. 32:8). Then there was room on earth among the nations for His anointed One to reign. What room is there now in man's arrangements for such an event? Men have parceled out the world as far as they could, have created counterpoises in the preponderance of influence on the one side, and provided checks against any encroachments on the other; but where have they left room for Him to come in, who must and shall reign? The world goes on without Him, and as the opening verse of the Psalm shows, desires nothing better than His prolonged absence - willing to put up with

anything rather than to have Him present. What does the reader think of this? 'Tis true, we cannot alter the existing arrangements of nations, for that is not work to which God's people are called. To obey the "powers that be" is our plain duty, where God's claims do not conflict with human enactments; but, in proportion as we enter into God's thoughts, we must look forward for a brighter day to dawn, and the advent in power of the Lord Jesus Christ to take place. Nothing short of this, as regards the government of this world, will correspond to God's mind; nothing short of it should we desire.

For whom then are we to wait? Who is God's chosen King? Let the Psalm reply - nor the Psalm simply, but a speaker who is now introduced in it, the King Himself, who tells us about His Person, the extent of His dominion, the manner of its acquisition, and the character of His rule - disclosing what no mortal ear heard - the Father's communication to the Son, when He entered this world as the virgin's child.

"I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee." Of birth in time these words undoubtedly speak; and, while marking

this One out as distinct from all angelic beings (Heb. 1:5), they direct attention to One only out of all the myriads of men who have lived and died upon earth, the long-promised Messiah, to whose advent in humiliation the Apostle Paul directly applies them (Acts 13:33). The promise to the fathers was fulfilled when God raised up Jesus. But does not this refer, it may be asked, to His resurrection rather than to His birth? Clearly not. For when the former is treated of, the Apostle defines it thus: "concerning that He raised Him up from the dead," and quotes another scripture with reference to that truth, from Isa. 55:3. The fact is, verse 33 is concerned with the Lord's presence on earth, and verse 34 clears up what would otherwise be an unanswerable objection, how, if He was the Messiah, He should have passed through death. Predicted as God's Son, as well as the virgin's child, how could these statements be harmonized? His miraculous conception explains them. Born of the virgin He truly was, but conceived of the Holy Ghost. Wherefore, as the angel Gabriel announced to Mary - "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). It is in this sense, born in time, really a man, but God's Son, that the Father's words are to be understood. And though all believers are born of the Spirit, and to be sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty is their title and position likewise, yet of none but Jesus was it or will it ever be true that existence as man upon earth is due to conception by the Holy Ghost. Thus distinguished from all angels, because He is God's Son - distinguished too from all men because conceived of the Holy Ghost in His mother's womb, we are turned from all who have appeared in the world to One alone as answering the, description of God's King. The King Himself it is who speaks, and points out what is peculiar to His Person.

Born a man, His position in relation to men is only what could have been expected. On the day of His birth, Jehovah addressed Him, and promised Him the dominion over all the human race. "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." He must be more than man to have had this communication then made to Him; but as man, born into this world, He is here addressed. All belongs to God, and He promises to bestow it on His Son. What title to earthly possessions can equal this - the free grant from the One who possesses it! The devil offered Him afterward the kingdoms of the world - not knowing surely that already it had been promised Him by the only One who could fulfill His word.

Unconditional too is the promise which certainly will be made good. How this tells of the perfectness of the Lord Jesus Christ! Adam, before he was tried, filled the place of head on earth. He fell and lost it. The inheritance was promised to the Lord, to be bestowed on Him whenever He shall ask for it. Here there is no room for any change in God's plans. When the Lord asks, He shall have all this; for though, as a man untried, He received the promise, in Him there was, there could be no failure. How God manifests His delight in this One, called by Him, "My Son"! A dominion wider in extent than ever David or Solomon acquired, is His by free grant from the Lord Jehovah, His Father. Dreams of universal sovereignty men have before now indulged in. Attempts to reduce and to retain in subjection large portions of the earth under one scepter have been made, and for a time have proved successful; but to none besides His Son has Gad promised the dominion of the whole earth. All nations, peoples, and languages shall indeed, in the fullest sense, do obeisance to Him; and, differing from all empires that have arisen, His will never pass away. The uttermost parts of the earth too are to be His possessions. No frontiers with which men are familiar, as mountains, seas, or rivers, will mark the boundaries of His kingdom, since the confines of the earth alone will limit His possessions on this globe.

The title and extent of His dominion being declared, the character of His rule is next set forth. As He received the authority from His Father, so by Him is the manner of His kingdom determined. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." One thing then is clear - when He wields the scepter, none will be able to resist the might of His arm. God has given all nations to Him to reduce them to subjection. To resist successfully His authority will be impossible, for the rod of iron will prove itself too strong for the vaunted power of man. To effect a compromise with Him, or to preserve a position independent of Him, will be out of the question; for as a potter's vessel is helpless in the hands of its destroyer, so will human might be powerless in the presence of God's chosen King. Complete subjection to Him, as the absolute arbiter of their destinies, will be the only condition on which men will live under His rule. No bonds of love, no silken cords of affection will be the connecting link between Him and the nations on earth. The breaking them with a rod of iron tells of their antagonistic spirit; the dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel indicates that the exercise of power is the only means of keeping in check the otherwise unbridled will of fallen and unconverted men. What a change all this will introduce from what is now manifested about the Lord Jesus Christ! Ignorance and unconcern about Him now characterize the world; then He will be known and obeyed, however unwillingly, wherever man shall be upon this globe of ours.

God's purpose about Christ thus unequivocally declared, what remains but to exhort men to submit to the authority of the Lord Jesus. Kings and rulers, at the beginning of the Psalm, are depicted as taking counsel together against Him. Kings and judges, at the close, are exhorted to obey Him; for to obey God, they must bow before His Son. Professed subjection to God, apart from submission to Christ, is mere pretension, which will not be accepted for a moment. To serve Jehovah with fear, and to rejoice with trembling, to kiss the Son lest He be angry, and they perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little, these are the injunctions given them; for life under His rule, with the retention of place and dignity on earth, is all that is here offered to them. Life, be it observed, not salvation, is the portion held out to them. But, though the question of salvation is not raised with these kings and judges, there is a little sentence which is pregnant with meaning - "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." This suggests the existence of a class

different from those just spoken of -Gods saints, who have put confidence in God's King. Saints on earth, when He shall reign, who will have passed through trials for His sake, will witness that this is true. Saints in heaven will likewise attest to the faithfulness of God to His Word. And we know, ere the day of Christ's triumph dawns, that this is so, as we receive with unhesitating confidence the simple statements of the Word. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him now; blessed will they be forever with Him on His throne, beholding His glory, and sharing in the inheritance (John 17:24; Eph. 1:10-14; Rev. 3:21).

But why has He not yet asked for and received the kingdom? Why this delay between God's promise and His petition for its fulfillment? The answer we know, and what answer have we to give? He waits to be gracious. He waits till the number of saints, who are to reign with Him, shall be complete. The dominion is His. The promise of Jehovah to Him makes that clear, and His present place at the Father's right hand manifests that the One who was on the cross, the suffering Messiah, is also the One who will appear as the triumphant Messiah; and we know, for He has told us, that He will not be alone on His throne. All who overcome now shall have a place with Him then. In the Psalm, which gives the earthly aspect of the kingdom, He recounts God's promise to Him. In Rev. 2:26, 27, which tells about the heavenly aspect, He gives promises to His own, and lets them know that they shall rule as He will, and the extent of His dominion over all nations shall be theirs likewise; for what God is doing is this - by the preaching of the gospel of His grace - to gather out souls from the world to be companions of His Son when on His own throne.

Why then need attention be drawn to this Psalm? Because the struggle has begun. Acts 4:24-28 lets us into this secret, and acquaints us with the first actors in the business. Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. From that day to this the struggle has continued; for just two sides, and two only can there be - neutrality in such a matter is only disguised opposition - for he that is not with Christ is against Him. Yet the issue of the conflict is not doubtful. Christ shall reign, and all allowed to live, when He reigns, must kiss the Son. God's determination is plain. He has announced it beforehand, but has not told us when He will make it good. But as surely as Joseph, whom his brethren put out of their sight, became lord of Egypt, so all God's counsels about His Son Jesus shall infallibly be accomplished. Successfully to resist Christ's authority then will be hopeless, for power arrayed against Him must only end in the complete discomfiture of His opponents (Rev. 17:14; 19:19-21). But now is the time for proving the truth of the closing sentence of the Psalm, to trust in Him, and to be blessed for evermore.

Messianic Psalms: God's King: Psalm 22

"Because of Thine indignation and Thy wrath" are words uttered by the Lord in Psalm 102, with reference to the reason of His death. How they can be reconciled with what He deserved, as His walk and His ministry show, Psalm 22 clears up. On the cross He bore God's wrath, but as the sinner's substitute.

That this Psalm treats of Him, the sin-bearer, who died upon the cross to make atonement, the New Testament makes plain. The first words of it were uttered by Him upon the cross, when for the first and last time they were used in all their fullness. The language of the 8th verse was the language of the chief priests to Him as He hung in agony on the tree, unconscious that they only made themselves the mouthpiece to express what David beforehand had declared the Lord's enemies would say. The action described in verse 18, we are expressly told, was fulfilled at the foot of the cross, when the soldiers parted His garments among them, and for His vesture, woven without seam, they cast lots. The first part of verse 22 was accomplished by the Lord Himself on the day of His resurrection, the historical account of which John gives us, and the doctrinal teaching of which the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews brings out to us (John 20:17; Heb. 2:12). None, with these facts before them, can doubt of whom the Psalm speaks-no, nor who it is who speaks throughout it; for one Person only, can we say, here speaks for the instruction of God's saints. He who cries out at the beginning, leads the praises of the redeemed in verses 22-25. He before whose eye the soldiers divided the garments, and whom the chief priests derided with their taunts, describes the grand results for Jehovah which would accrue from His death upon the cross. It was proper, we must admit, that the Lord Jesus should Himself proclaim to men and the universe the glorious results of His agony and death.

What a condition was that to which Messiah, God's well beloved Son, stooped! God's saints can find comfort in the remembrance, if called to suffer for the truth, that they have part in the sufferings of Christ (2 Cor. 1:5; Col. 1:24; 1 Pet. 4:13); but He had to say that in one respect, in suffering for God, He stood alone. "They trusted," He says of saints at a former epoch, "and Thou didst deliver them.... But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." It was indeed so when servants of the chief priests buffeted Him, and soldiers of the Roman governor mocked Him. He was made an object of contempt and ridicule for the multitude - every feeling of a man outraged, every right of a man violated. These were ingredients in that cup in which bodily suffering was added to mental trial.

Besides all this, and far deeper than all these sufferings, He experienced what no human language can portray, for no human thought can conceive the agony which drew from His lips the cry with which the Psalm opens, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Here, and only here, in the whole Bible, have we any clue to what He must have passed through when dealt with by God as the sinner's substitute; yet it is but a feeble clue after all, for the negative manner of expressing His greatest suffering cannot convey to our minds the positive agony that He then underwent. Just enough is conveyed by the words to teach us that those sufferings were inexpressible, and

inconceivable by man, though real, and really borne. For it was not as anticipating something which lay in His path, that He uttered that cry on the cross; but, as having already experienced it, He thus cried out. The extent, intensity, and character of His sufferings, men knew nothing about till just at their close.

Of both suffering from God in making atonement, and suffering from man, the Psalm speaks, but in markedly different terms. Of the former the Lord has to say, "So far from helping Me." Of the latter He cried, "Be not Thou far from Me, O LORD: O My strength, haste Thee to help 'Me."

v. 19. He sought no respite from sufferings needful to be endured to make atonement; He asked deliverance from sufferings from men who took advantage of His condition in grace, and received it. The Lord heard Him and delivered Him. From what formed no needful part of the momentous work He came to perform, He asked for help, and, we learned, received it; but from that which could not be averted, if God's will was to be done, and man's salvation to be secured, He shrank not, nor received relief.

"That all was done, that all was borne,

Thine agony, Thy cross, can tell."

The Psalm then divides itself into two parts in verse 21. Throughout the first part we meet with turmoil, discord, rage, and enmity - men attempting and accomplishing all they desired, in putting Him out of the world who was the object of their unrelenting hatred. In the second part we meet with an atmosphere of peace and blessedness. Throughout the first part the Lord is passive, suffering from God, and from His creatures; throughout the second He is active. Men's thoughts, motives, and desires are disclosed in what they did to Him. His thoughts and actions are told out in His own words. But, though in the second part all is peace and quietness, there is no silence. The din of this world's discord had been heard when He hung on the tree, beset by the bulls of Bashan, and taunted in His bodily agony by those who professed to be leaders and teachers in Israel. All that quieted down by the death of the object of their hatred, the noise of men's opposition giving way to the wailing of the women and others who lamented Him. Night set in, and the darkest day which the world had ever seen became a thing of the past. His enemies returned to their homes and to their families, to resume, when the sabbath was past and the feast was ended, their wonted occupations. His body was laid in the tomb, the stone rolled to the door, and all seemed secure. The guard of soldiers kept watch over the grave of Israel's Messiah. Men had done all they could, pursued Him to the latest hour of His life on earth, and only stopped because death effectually barred all further action against Him.

The silence which ensued on His death He first broke, and thereby showed what was in His heart. "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." Not a word of judgment, not a thought of vengeance, only love, and a desire for God to be known, we learn, then occupied His thoughts. Love was manifested in thinking of others, and the desire to make God known was expressed in the resolution to praise Him openly. "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), tells us what the Psalm does not-something of the personal excellence of Him who hung upon that cross. "All of one"; that is, one lot or company, as men, He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Marvelous

grace, that such a statement should be made in God's Word, connecting together those who were otherwise wide as the poles asunder- the Sanctifier and the sanctified. He first declared it, and the Holy Ghost, by the Apostle, enlarged on it. It is not, however, universal brotherhood, embracing all the race, that we here read about. Such a tenet is foreign to Scripture, and only betrays gross ignorance as to God's nature and man's condition. This brotherhood is only predicated of the Sanctifier and the sanctified - terms suggestive of man's condition by nature, which needs that he should be sanctified, as well as of the nature of Him who sanctifies those otherwise unsanctified; for, what a mere man, however holy, could never effect, He does, and provides that they should know it at the earliest possible opportunity.

On earth, before the cross, He had proclaimed in what close relationship to Himself He would regard all those who heard and did God's will (Luke 8:21). To His disciples He had said that He was their Master, and all they were brethren (Matt. 23:8). Now, after His resurrection, He first addressed them as His brethren, being not ashamed thus to describe them. To Mary first (John 20:17), then to the company of women returning in haste from the sepulcher to announce the Lord's resurrection (Matt. 28:10), He entrusted a message to His brethren. To whom were they to deliver it? What class of people could this be? They all knew without a doubt, and carried the message without hesitation to His disciples, who now were His brethren. At that time, therefore, there were those on earth whom He thus owned, and the women recognized them as such. Are there any still? Thank God there are. For all who hearken to God's Word are born of God, and are of that class styled by the Lord as His brethren.

Found on earth in the company of the saints (Psa. 16), acknowledging a common position with them even after His resurrection (Psa. 40), He here announces that they stand in the closest relationship with Him, for His Father is their Father; His God is their God. As God's Son from all eternity, He might have said, "My Father and your Father," without any implication (doctrinally) of having taken human nature; but as a man born of the virgin, He adds, "My God and your God." Between Him and the saints the difference is immense, and must ever remain so; but the relation to God is similar. His words tell of a distinction while declaring the relationship-My Father, My God, your Father, your God.

Now that the relationship is confessed, and the saints declared to be His brethren, we learn what He would make known. He would tell God's name to them. His public ministry ceased when the Jews finally determined to crucify Him. But death and resurrection could not separate Him from His brethren. On the very day that He rose, He was found in their company in Jerusalem. The doors were shut for fear of the Jews, but this could not hinder intercourse between Him and His own. He stood in their midst and taught them the fulfillment, by His death, of the written Word of God. None but His disciples did He then, or afterward, own as the saints of God or the assembly of God. The Jews had cast Him out; but outside of Judaism, and apart from the temple ritual, in the room where His disciples assembled, He was found. A company, whom the chief priests and scribes, with the Pharisees and Sadducees would disown, He acknowledged, and to them He declared God's name; that is, what He is, evidenced by what He says and does. The Jews thought they knew about God; His name, however, was to be declared by Christ, and that only to His own brethren. That company, to be afterward known as the sect everywhere spoken against, had a special interest for Him, and has still. To those composing it, He declared what God is; that is, His name. And besides this, in their midst, the only congregation which God could then, as now, own, He was

to praise God. How contrary was all this to men's thoughts! Those who seemed but fit subjects for the executioner's weapon, unworthy to live, to proscribe whom and to persecute whom even unto strange cities was an act, it was thought, well pleasing to God, these were the only people, after the Lord's resurrection, among whom He would be found, and to whom He would declare or tell out God's name. "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live" (Acts 22:22), lets us into the thoughts of the Jews about the disciples of the Lord Jesus. And yet it was to this class alone that the Lord Jesus here says He would address Himself, and among them strike the keynote of praise.

The songs of Zion might resound through the temple courts, but the keynote of praise, to which God could now hearken, was struck elsewhere. First struck by the risen Savior, it has never yet died out. From age to age, from country to country, has this song of praise spread, and heaven itself will forever ring with the full, rich melody flowing forth from each one, and the unbroken harmony of countless voices uniting in praise to God and to the Lamb. In the Church, an assembly gathered on new ground apart from Jewish ordinances, the true note of praise was first raised by Him, who came from God and went to God. Praise for the heavenly people was rightly started by Him who belongs to heaven. At the Red Sea, Moses and the children of Israel, with Miriam and the women with their timbrels, praised God for their deliverance. In this Psalm, He who is Jehovah, as a man, leads the songs of the redeemed.

There is a reason for this. He has suffered and has been delivered; therefore He can sing, leading His people in their songs of worship, because of God's mercy and God's delivering power. As having experienced it, He can sing of it, and thus teach His people the suited language to use before God. He states in Psalm 40 that His deliverance would be an encouragement to others; in Psalm 102, God's answering the prayer of the destitute is to be instruction for a future generation; but in Psalm 22, it is not encouragement for others, nor instruction for a future age, but the suited language for God's saints now, that He would illustrate by His own example.

The deliverer has been Himself delivered; their Savior has known God's salvation for Himself (v. 24). His song, therefore, His people can join in. But here we are taken beyond Judaism to the sheep outside the fold - the two flocks, as we know elsewhere, now made one, composed of believers from among the Jews and from among the Gentiles. Into depths greater than they ever have sunk, Christ has gone down, and from them has been brought up, the witness to them that God answers prayer; the witness too, by His resurrection, of the perfect acceptance of that work because of which He had to cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

But a time is coming when the praises, led by Him, of the congregation of God's saints, as at present owned by God, will cease to be heard upon earth. Caught up to be with the Lord in heaven, their place and their service will be found no more on this globe. Will praise on earth then forever cease? No; Israel will again be brought forward as God's earthly people, and praise will ascend from the godly remnant of them, manifested as the people that Jehovah has formed for Himself. Who will lead them in praise? The Psalm answers this question. Christ will do it. Again will He strike a keynote, and God's earthly people will respond to it: "My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation: I will pay• My vows before them that fear Him." v. 25. He alone has been in circumstances similar to those they will pass through; but having gone down into death for them, died "for that nation" (John 11:51), their deliverance is secured, who will have experienced a trial

similar to His, anticipating the outpouring of God's wrath-in their case deserved, in His case endured as the substitute and the sin offering.

That we are here on the ground of the earthly people is clear, for the next verse (the consequence of what is celebrated in verse 25) tells of the meek eating and being satisfied, which will only take place when the Lord appears to reign. Contrast verse 26 with verse 24. In the latter we have the consequences of the Lord's deliverance, which saints now can share in. In the former we have what will only be made good to those who shall inherit the earth. Then follows the full result as it affects the whole globe:

"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and He is the governor among the nations. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him: and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this."

Thus the counsels of God about the kingdom will be made good; and in this Psalm, which shows us the depths into which the King in His grace descended, we have announced for certain and full accomplishment of all that God has purposed about this earth. Dying on the cross, all might appear lost; so here, where the former is set forth, the latter is also reaffirmed. Not one thing has failed, Joshua could say. "Not one thing shall fail," we can add. All will be done, the kingdom be Jehovah's, and His Son be the King, who is Jehovah; for "the word of our God shall stand forever."

Messianic Psalms: God's King: Psalm 40

Written, as the Psalms were, for the instruction of others, and not simply to record the experience of the one whose thoughts they express, we find at times in the construction of these sacred songs a methodical arrangement very different from what might have been expected. Of this the Psalm before us is a good example, for; historically speaking, the first four verses have their place at the conclusion instead of at the beginning of the Psalm, announcing as they do the answer to the cry of the poor and needy One, which we meet with in the closing verses. The purport of this arrangement seems plain; for the Psalms were written to encourage God's saints in trial, and to afford suited expressions for the thoughts of their hearts. Now to know that others are in the furnace with the sufferer will show him that he is not alone and may check the thoughts so common under such circumstances, that he is singular in what he has to pass through; but the companionship of others in the trial offers no ground for expecting deliverance from it. Yet this is what the sufferer wants and, thank God, it is what the Word provides. So before reading of the trials which forced the cry of distress from His lips, we learn that He has been brought out of them, and the new song of praise and thanksgiving has taken the place of the prayer for deliverance. Hence others may be encouraged to act like the delivered One when placed in similar circumstances. For the comfort is this, that He has been brought out of all His trials by the goodness and power of His God. Had it been the might of His arm that had gotten Him the victory, His example would only avail for those who possessed the like strength. Any wanting that would find no encouragement for them in the knowledge of His salvation. But that is not the aspect of things we have here. It is the full deliverance of the poor One-of the needy One-who having felt the power of man's opposition, has been saved by the power of Jehovah's arm, and has thus learned what it was to be thrown upon God. This is what God's saints want, and what the godly remnant in Israel will find applicable to their condition upon earth.

Another remark as to the structure of the Psalm will not be without interest. We learn from Peter that the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, and guided them in their writings (1 Pet. 1:11); so that the sacred writers, taught by the Holy Spirit, clothed the ideas which God intended should be in the Word, in language suited to express His thoughts and those of God's saints. All that the Lord could say, His saints cannot, for in some respects He stood alone. Certain things were true of Him in one way (v. 12), and true of His people in another; but many things, to which He could give utterance, His people can take up as true of themselves likewise. On the cross, of course, when making atonement, He was alone. Suffering the consequences of sins He was the sinner's Substitute-the thieves suffering justly, receiving the due reward of their deeds-He having done nothing amiss, yet bearing the sins of others. Sins then, as laid upon Him, He might call His own, but in a sense very different from that in which others must acknowledge them as theirs.

Besides suffering from God when making atonement, He suffered from men as God's faithful witness upon earth. His people can share in this in their measure; therefore the language He could use, they can likewise, for He has been in circumstances similar to theirs. Now, as we read this Psalm, we must admit that there is one and the same speaker throughout. He who sings the song

is the same One who uttered the cry; and He who looks for deliverance is the One who is the subject of prophecy. The Psalm is clearly the utterance of Christ, and part of it (vv. 6, 7) refers to Him exclusively. But we learn from Psalm 70, which is nearly the same as Psalm 40:13-17, how God's saints can take up, as divinely provided for them, the language He could use. What is peculiar to Christ in Psalm 40 is not reproduced in Psalm 70; but what a saint under pressure from the opposition of men might express, is given us as His language in Psalm 40, and is put into the mouth of the saints in Psalm 70.

Had we only Psalm 40, we might not have been able to draw a line between language there peculiar to Him, and language common to Him and to others. With Psalm 70 to compare with Psalm 40, we can on the highest authority do this; and while marking what applies especially to Him, we can see how really and how fully He entered into circumstances similar to those in which God's saints have been, and may be found; so not only in walking before God, but in His bearing as He suffered from men, is the Lord Jesus Christ an example and an encouragement to God's saints.

Are we wrong in saying that the Psalm applies to Christ? The statement it contains makes the matter pretty plain, and the comment of the Holy Ghost by Paul, on His own words by David dispels all doubt. "In the volume of the book it is written of Me," introduces us not to David, of whom we have no prediction before his birth, but to another, who is the subject of divine revelation. "I come," tells us that He had an existence before He appeared on this scene; for no mere child of man, speaking of his entrance into this world, could say, "I have come." Thus, His pre-existence is implied, and the agreement of His will with the action is announced. For, though taking human form, the form of a servant, He speaks not as one obeying a command, but as one agreeing to take up a work, and delighting to do God's will. The conclusion which must force itself on the mind from the words of the Psalm is declared to be correct by the statement in Heb. 10:5: "Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice," etc. His presence on earth was to be the harbinger of a great change, as His presence here at a future day will inaugurate a new regime. What Israel had brought to God year after year, was not that which He came to offer. Burnt offerings and sin offerings of the herd and of the flock God would not require. The Speaker here was to be the Sacrifice. He was God's Lamb for both sin offering and burnt offering. Obedience to God's will in the offering up of Himself was to characterize Him. "Mine ears hast Thou opened" (or digged) expresses this; for "a body hast Thou prepared Me," which we read in Hebrews, is the statement of the Greek translation-man's paraphrase of God's own thought.

The great burden of the Psalm is the Lord's life of ministry upon earth while, however, looking forward to His death with its consequences, first of opposition from men, and then of deliverance by Jehovah out of all His trials, being brought up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay. Verses 1-3 tell of this deliverance; verse 4 shows that others may experience a similar one; verses 5-10 recount the subjects of His ministry; verses 11-17 give His cry to Jehovah consequent upon the opposition He met with from men.

He preached to the Jews, righteousness, and set forth God's righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, loving-kindness, and truth, in the great congregation (the general assembly of the nation-not the elders and doctors simply). Before the flood there had been a preacher of righteousness. When the Lord appeared, He too preached righteousness, but under very different

circumstances. Noah could show men what they ought to do, and warn them of the sure fulfillment of God's word, but the patriarch had nothing to point to as a witness that God was faithful, except previous actions in judgment (Gen. 3; 4). The flood attested God's truth, but only when not too late for man to prove God's loving-kindness and salvation. But the Lord's presence on earth told of God's faithfulness, for the Word had often predicted His advent; and as He moved about from place to place, He declared God's love, and announced His willingness to save.

A preacher of a different class Israel had formerly known. Solomon, the wisest of men, was charged with this duty among his countrymen. He preached of man's follies, and sought to impress on his subjects the vanities of the things of this life. John the Baptist, at a later epoch, was known as a preacher, proclaiming the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. But differing from Noah, Solomon, and John, the Lord preached the glad tidings of the kingdom of God—a message never before delivered by any teacher or messenger from God; for it was not till He, the King, stood upon the earth, that the kingdom as a present thing could be preached. By-and-by on the mountains of Judah will voices be heard proclaiming the advent in power of Him who Himself preached in lowliness the gospel of the kingdom (Isa. 52:7). The Lord's ministry was, however, different in character from that which will be. On earth—though in heaven—the only begotten Son declared the Father, and displayed in His actions and taught by His word what God was. To His disciples He insisted on the need of righteousness (Matt. 5:20) as necessary to enter the kingdom; to Nicodemus He spoke of God's love; before the Pharisees He justified God's ways in receiving sinners (Luke 15); and to the woman of Sychar He made known for what the Father was now seeking (John 4:23). In Galilee He told the multitude of life everlasting (John 6); in Jerusalem He proclaimed the grace which God was offering (John 5:24, 25); and the full refreshment provided for sinners, whose only needful qualification was to thirst for it (John 7:37). Rest too for the weary He offered (Matt. 11); and the door to abundance of pasture He pointed out (John 10:9); God's grace and man's need He freely and fully preached; but what the results would be to Himself, the Psalm beforehand made known.

Ministering thus among men, declaring God, proclaiming His salvation, He has to turn to Jehovah, and on the ground of His own faithful service await His intervention for deliverance. Had it been the power of the enemy which thus openly assailed Him, none need have wondered; for He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). But the instruments used to kill Him were men on whose behalf He came—manifested, as John also tells us, to take away sins (1 John 3:5). From these, for whom He so patiently and graciously labored, He asks deliverance. They sought after His soul to destroy it; He sought to give them everlasting life. At Nazareth and at Jerusalem men attempted to kill Him, who was God's faithful witness among them, once at the former place and several times at the latter. At last they succeeded, and Jerusalem thus earned the unenviable title of Sodom and Egypt, and the place where our Lord was crucified (Rev. 11:8).

What had He done to deserve this at their hands? He had preached God's faithfulness and God's salvation. He had declared God's righteousness and God's truth. His feelings under this hostility, the result of His ministry, He here lets us understand. He was not as one indifferent to their behavior and insults, or as one conscious of His own strength, looking down from a pinnacle of greatness on the rage and spite of puny creatures. He felt deeply what He passed through, and looked only to the Lord for deliverance. "Innumerable evils have compassed Me about," He has to say, and Jehovah's active interference He asks for as really wanted: "Withhold not Thou Thy

tender mercies from Me, o LORD: let Thy loving-kindness and Thy truth continually preserve Me." "Be pleased O LORD, to deliver Me: O LORD, make haste to help Me." Such words prove what He felt and what He desired; and the opening of the Psalm acquaints us with that which He experienced from God, as the body of it tells us what He experienced from man. He cried, and was delivered. He was heard because of His piety. Impossible was it that a faithful witness should not be delivered, all must admit. But the depth of need into which the faithful and true Witness descended, tells a tale of man's heart, and of His obedience. Heard, raised up, and so delivered, He exemplified in His own salvation the sure future of those who bear witness faithfully for God in the world which has crucified His Son. And the new song, at a future time to be sung by myriads of the redeemed, the Lord Jesus was the first to pour forth, for the term, "new song" has reference in Scripture to the celebration of full and final victory, and that in connection with the kingdom. Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 15) did not sing it, but their descendants will bear their part in it (Psalm 96; 98), and joyful tones from creation's voice will form the accompaniment to that new song sung by God's ransomed and finally rescued people upon earth. Nor will earth only hear it, for in heaven, around God's throne, the heavenly saints will give expression to it (Rev. 5:9). No angels that we read of have part in this. Those only who have been delivered by God can join in it. The Captain of our salvation first, then all who share in deliverance will sing the new song, for in common with Him they will have proved God's power to help.

Delivered from His enemies, He looks for their destruction (vv. 14, 15), the righteous retribution which their conduct deserves. As delivered by God, He owns the godly as His associates, and this too after His resurrection. On earth He found His delight in them; on high He does not separate Himself from them. "Praise unto our God" shows that He is forever a man; and though Himself the only faithful witness who never once failed, He reminds all God's servants that He regards them as in connection with Himself. "Our God" witnesses of this-His voice to us from beyond the grave. By-and-by the whole universe will see that He is not ashamed to call us "brethren." But now "our God" and "us-ward" speaks to our hearts of this grace; for having once identified Himself with God's saints, He will never separate Himself from them.

Nor is this all. The present effect on others of His deliverance He describes. His feet established, the new song put into His mouth, all that Jehovah has done for Him who waited God's time, and has proved His faithfulness and power, will tell on many hearts, and encourage suffering disciples (v. 3). Results of everlasting importance flow from the Lord's atoning work; results too of great value accrue to God and to the saints from His deliverance out of death. God's power to deliver is seen, therefore confidence in God must be engendered. How great that confidence should be, the following verse sets forth, announcing the blessing of the man (Gr., lit., the strong man) who "maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies." Not the poor feeble one only, but the naturally strong man, should learn wherein his great strength lies.

Faithful in service, we learn what the true spirit of a minister should be. Drawing attention by His ministry to what God is and does, He desires all eyes to be turned to, and all hearts to be occupied with, the Lord Jehovah alone. God's salvation they should love. "The LORD be magnified," they should continually say. To rejoice in Jehovah, and be glad in His God, is what He desires for them, and trust in the Lord, encouraged in others by the knowledge of His deliverance, is the wish of His heart. This should be the result of true ministry, and it is what He looks for. Differing from all other ministers who speak of a work done and proclaim God as the righteous One and the Giver of all

good likewise, He, who was in Himself God's gift, and did the work in which we rest, and because of which we give thanks to God, yet seeks not to draw attention to Himself, but turns all hearts to God. Thus the character of Christ's ministry, the consequences of it to Himself, and the spirit which actuated Him, are brought out by the instrumentality of the inspired penman.

A few remarks in conclusion. In Psalm 16 we meet with an atmosphere unruffled. Here we read of opposition and hatred which pursued Him to death; for the former Psalm gives us His walk in communion with God; this latter, His service for God among men. Thus both Psalms are needed to show us what the Lord Jesus Christ was when upon earth. The former acquaints us with that which was within Him- this, with that which was around Him. Psalm 16 shows us how to walk-this, how to serve, our example in both being Him who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:23); and for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:2); receiving a title of which He is indeed worthy, "The leader and the perfecter of faith" (W.K. Trans.), a title descriptive of Him, and suggestive to us.

Messianic Psalms: God's King: Psalm 45

Chapter 7- Psalm 45

From psalms which speak in part of the past and present, we turn next to two which speak wholly of the future. The Lord's present place we learn from Psalm 110, and the deductions to be drawn from such a position, the New Testament opens out to us. There we are directed to a different subject- the reappearance in person of the Lord Jesus on the theater of these events, connected with His humiliation and death.

There is a peculiarity about Him in this aspect that is predicated of no one else. In common with thousands, nay myriads, of God's saints, He passed away from this scene by death. But of Him alone it is revealed that, having gone out of the world by that door, He shall stand again in person upon this globe. When He returns to reign, His heavenly people will come with Him (Zech. 14:5; 1 Thess. 3:13), for seated as John saw Him in the vision, on a white horse, the armies of heaven will follow in His train (Rev. 19:11-14), and the saints of the high, or heavenly, places shall take the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever-even forever and ever (Dan. 7:18). But of none of the heavenly saints, who have gone down into death, is it predicted that they shall tread again on this earth. The Lord Jesus, however, will. On the Mount of Olives, from which, in the presence of His disciples, He went up to heaven, He will again stand; and, in keeping with the circumstances of that day, creation shall acknowledge, by commotion, the presence of her Creator and Lord (Zech. 14:4, 5).

Man's place, after he has died, knows him no more. Not so with the Lord Jesus Christ. At Jerusalem He died; at Jerusalem shall He reappear; and the city of the great King shall welcome with acclamations His return in power, moved with a more real and deeper emotion than when the populace, on the occasion of His triumphant entry on the ass's colt, asked of the multitude, "Who is this?" Their question betrayed ignorance of what they ought to have known, and unconcern about Him, without whom their blessings can never be enjoyed. "Ye shall not see Me henceforth," said the Lord, apostrophizing Jerusalem, "till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Concerned she will be then on His return, and will welcome it with gladness (Matt. 23:39), herself to be known henceforth by a new name, Jehovah Shammah; that is, Jehovah is there. Of the associations of the Lord Jesus with Jerusalem this Psalm treats.

How different were the feelings of the psalmist, as he sang by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit about the return in power to Jerusalem of David's Son and Lord, from that manifested by its inhabitants when the Lord entered it in accordance with the terms of Zechariah's prediction. Great indeed was his emotion as, looking through the vista of ages, he described the personal appearance of One whom he had never seen, but with whose Person he will be made acquainted, and whose triumphal progress he will with his eyes behold. "My heart is inditing [or has bubbled up] a good matter." What interest this had for him! Evidently he was full of it. The things he had made about the King stirred his soul to its very depths; and like one whose thoughts are engrossed with his subject, he mentions not the Lord by name, but at first only tells us of one of

His titles, as if all must know equally with himself to whom the appellation of the "King" rightly belongs. To the writer, all was plain as, under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, he penned the words which clothed, by divine appointment, the thoughts of the Spirit of God. His tongue was the pen of a ready writer. Thus the words we read are the words he uttered, written down probably by himself, that the inspired prophet and the reader might rejoice together.

Two leading thoughts form the subject of this song - the personal description of the Lord Jesus returned from heaven to earth, and the beauty and adornment of the Queen, Jerusalem, in the days of her restoration to Jehovah's favor. Now she is as the wife put away for her transgressions (Isa. 50:1); then she will be the wife publicly acknowledged, having Jehovah for her husband (Isa. 54:4, 5) and clad in her beautiful garments (Isa. 52:1). On Zion the King had been firmly set by God's decree (Psalm 2:6); from Jerusalem the word is to go forth (Isa. 2:3); and here we have a description of the metropolis of the whole earth, as the Queen at the Lord's right hand, clad in gold of Ophir (Psalm 45:9). When facing death as man and Messiah in Psalm 102 He looked forward to Zion being rebuilt, and to Jehovah's praise being declared in Jerusalem. Now we see how fully that will be accomplished, and how the words of Isaiah will be fulfilled - "Thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." Isa. 62:12. In the day of her distress she was called an "Outcast... Zion, whom no man seeketh after." Jer. 30:17. Here she is described as sought out indeed, for the rich among the people are to entreat her favor (v. 12); and the daughter of Tire, that city, the synonym for commercial greatness and wealth, will be there with a gift, the substance of the world being then placed at Jerusalem's disposal.

But not only will earthly wealth flow to her, and temporal possessions be her portion, but what is far more valuable, she will possess an attraction for the King, who is here said to desire her beauty. All glorious within the house, her clothing of wrought gold, brought unto the king in raiment of needlework, surrounded by the virgins, her companions, how changed will her appearance and condition then be from what it was when Isaiah first described her (chap. 1:2123). God's purposes are unchangeable; therefore He will fulfill His mind about her.

But how can such a change be brought about so that the polluted one, divorced for her transgressions, should become an object of beauty for the King? The close connection between Isaiah 53 and 54 suggests the answer. In 53 we have the Lord's atoning work mentioned; in 54 the future glory of Jerusalem is described; and in 55 the grace which can be available for Jews and Gentiles is set forth, for what concerns Jerusalem and men is dependent on that mighty work treated of in 53. Hence we can understand how truly she will be an object of delight to Him whose death has availed for her. For though her filth will be washed away by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning (Isa. 4:4), she will owe all dealings with her for blessing to the atoning sacrifice of Christ. To deepen the sense of God's grace in the heart of the daughter of Zion, and surely in ours too, we read nothing in the psalm about Jerusalem, but of her beauty and change of condition. Her Lord's joy in her (not hers in Him) is that of which the psalmist makes mention.

An analogy may here be traced between Jerusalem, the wife, and the Church, the bride, the pearl of great price. Both owe their position and relation to the Lord, to His death for them. To possess the Church He died, and to present her to Himself an object of beauty and of delight forever He still labors. To be to Jerusalem a husband, after all her sins and idolatry, He died; but with her Jehovah had relations before the cross, whereas the Church had no existence till after His death. Thus,

though there is an analogy, there is also a great difference. Of Jerusalem it is written, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee." Isa. 54:7. Divorced once, she will be publicly owned as the wife when the Lord returns in glory. The Church is now only the bride; her marriage has yet to take place. Restoring grace Jerusalem will know, and forgiveness of all her past iniquities. Jehovah's wrath she has experienced, of which the Church, the bride, has known, and will know, nothing. On earth, as the wife, Jerusalem will be enriched with the world's substance, and have the place of preeminence above all other cities on the face of the globe, being the joy of the whole earth; yet she will only be the footstool of Jehovah. The Church, however, then above, will be the center of government for the universe, and not merely for the earth -giving light even to Jerusalem below her-for through her crystal walls the light of the glory of God will illumine continually the city on earth (Rev. 21; Isa. 60:20).

Jerusalem thus described as the Queen, telling of the complete putting away of her defilement, and the full favor of Jehovah again, and that to be enjoyed forever, we have also in this Psalm the personal description of the King as He will appear to men on earth. How He will appear when He comes into the air for His saints, we read not, for that has to do with heaven; but how He will look when earth again beholds Him, the Word of God does reveal to us. His coming out of heaven, Rev. 19:11-16 describes; His personal appearance as King at Jerusalem, this Psalm depicts. There is, of course, a reason for this. Called here, "The King," and rightly so, Scripture tells us that another will arrogate to himself that title, and by that name be known. The prophets Isaiah (30:33; 57:9) and Daniel (11:36) so speak of him, the antichrist of the future for Israel, the false prophet, who will support the blasphemous pretensions of the beast, for apostate Christendom (Rev. 13:11-17). He will claim to be the Messiah, and be received by the apostate portion of the Jews (John 5:43; Zech. 11:16, 17), so we can understand the importance of the description, personal and moral, of Him who is God's King, that the faithful may be on their guard, and be kept from following an apostate people.

On Christians who know what their hope is, and whence they are to look for its fulfillment (1 Thess. 1:10; Phil. 3:20), the presence of a man upon earth, claiming to be the Messiah, would have no effect. For from heaven He will come for whom we wait, and into the air, not to the earth, will the Lord descend when He comes to take us up to be forever with Himself (1 Thess. 4:17). But to the faithful remnant, who rightly will expect the appearance of Messiah upon earth, the importance of a personal description of Him, whom another will have been impersonating, all must admit. The current will run so strong in that day of abounding apostasy, that, without grace to stem it, the godly will be unable to keep their feet. The feelings of a saint, and his difficulties at that time, we have told us in Psalm 73. "My feet," he confesses, "were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped."

With the usual features of the antichrist, or false prophet, we are made familiar by the New Testament in 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 13. Self-exaltation or desire to be looked upon as God, and working miracles in support of his claim, will be characteristics of the false king. Power to put forth in connection with, and under the protecting hand of the first beast, the imperial ruler or head of the Roman earth, will antichrist wield to make all apostatize, and to worship the image of that which Scripture, to show its moral character in God's eye, calls a wild beast, whose only object and aim is the gratification of itself at the expense and injury of others. At that time there will be two beasts, so-called -the one the head of the Roman earth, the other the pretended Messiah

(Rev. 13). How different are the features of this horrid beast from those to be displayed in Him whom he will dare to impersonate! Though lamblike in outward appearance, yet his voice will betray his origin and his acts. Deceiving the world will indicate to God's saints his parentage.

Of the true Messiah we have, in Isa. 52:14 a description as He once appeared on earth - "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." We know how true that was. Isaiah and other writers predicted His sufferings when in humiliation; and we can point to Him alone as the One in whom they were all fulfilled. How correct will this description of Him which we have in the Psalm prove to be, time will show. "Thou art fairer," we read, "than the children of men: grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee forever." When manifested to the world all will see who is the King of God's choice. His personal appearance will mark Him out as the Head to whom all creation is to be subject. Grace, truth, meekness, and righteousness are characteristics of the King. Oppression, deceit, arrogance, and persecution of God's saints, even unto death, will be features by which antichrist will be known. Comparing the ways of the latter when in the zenith of his power, with the picture given us in this Psalm by the Spirit of the true Messiah, the saints of that day will see that they have still to wait for the One who will correspond to the psalmist's description. The world may be captivated by false prophets and miracles, and many of the returned remnant may be ensnared (Daniel tells us, "the many"; that is, mass of them), so great will be his influence and apparently convincing his claims; but the true Conqueror and Hope of Israel, the godly among them will still desiderate. What their trials will be, Psalms 52-59 in some measure recount. What the deliverance will be, Psalms 45-48 in some degree depict; the answer to the cry of the afflicted saints is found in Psalm 44. The King is described in 45; God's presence in Jerusalem is announced in 46; the conquest and subjection of the nations to Israel is declared in 47; and the security of Zion from all attacks of her foe is celebrated in 48.

Who then is "the King"? He is a man, the virgin's Son, David's heir, Abraham's seed; He is God also, as verse 6 proves. To Him it can be said, "Thy God," speaking of His humanity, and, "O God," speaking of His deity. Antichrist has never yet been seen on earth; but the Christ has been on this globe. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness" (v. 7), speaks of His character and ways when here in humiliation. Here then we see the end of a life in dependence upon God. Meek, He was faithful at all cost to Jehovah; so dominion and might are to be His, nay, are His now, and the world will become part of His inheritance. What a thought for those in trial in all ages, as they read in the Word what the Lord was, and what He will be some day. He was meek and righteous; He will be King, and execute judgment. As in the history of Joseph, so it will be exemplified in that of the Lord, that waiting for God, time ends in deliverance by God's power, salvation by God's good pleasure.

As might, conquest, and dominion will be His in that day (vv. 35), so a throne too which endures forever He will have, and the right, as Father of His people (Isa. 9:6), to make them princes over all the earth; for of Him, the King, not of Jerusalem, does verse 16 speak. So great, so glorious will be His kingdom on earth, that not as with sovereigns now will His ancestors be spoken of. David and Solomon will reflect no luster on His reign, for men will perceive that He is the fountain of power in Himself. The glory that has been will not be remembered, for the surpassing glory which will then be first and only seen in Him. With glory will be fame. His name will be remembered in all generations; therefore shall nations praise Him forever and ever. A sun we read of here which

rises and never sets. None before Him have attained to that preeminence, nor will any after Him, for He will have no successor. In the last occupant of David's throne the glory will culminate, but never decline.

The marked difference between antichrist and the Lord we have briefly noticed. The portion of each, when God shall stop the reign of lawlessness and cut short the trials of His elect, the Word also foretells. Cast alive into the lake of fire will be the doom of antichrist (Rev. 19:20); anointed by God with the oil of gladness above His fellows will be the portion of the Christ (v. 7).

But what part have we in all this? some may ask. Christ's glory, Christ's kingdom, do concern us. The Psalm does not teach on the heavenly portion; but it does just intimate the existence of heavenly saints. It speaks of the King's fellows, and we know from Heb. 3:14 who these are. In Psalm 16 the Lord calls them saints; in 22 He speaks of them as His brethren; here they are styled His fellows; in each place the proper term is used for the subject in hand. If He speaks of the class with which He would associate on earth, He calls them saints, separated unto God from the evil around them. When about to leave earth for heaven, He surnames them His brethren, that, though deprived of His presence outwardly, they might know the relationship which He acknowledges to exist between God Himself and them. And here, when the day of trial is looked at as over, and the day of His glory is about to dawn, we learn that those will not be forgotten in the time of His greatness who confessed Him in the days of His rejection. Saints, describes the class morally; brethren, describes the relationship between Him and them; and fellows, declares the association that will forever exist between Him and them. As His brethren, God, who is His Father, is theirs also; as His fellows, the kingdom, which belongs to Christ, they will share with Him.

The Name Above Every Name: Part 1 - the Ineffable Name

It is apparent, even to the ordinary reader of the Scriptures, that the revelation God has been pleased to make of Himself is gradual and progressive. Now believers walk in the light, as He is in the light; but in a former day clouds and darkness were round about Him, and necessarily so as long as righteousness and judgment were the habitation of His throne. But when Christ had accomplished the work of atonement, glorifying God in all that He is, having been made sin for us, the veil behind which God had dwelt, and which had concealed Him from His people, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and God could righteously gratify His own heart in coming out into the full display of what He is as revealed in Christ on the ground of redemption. These are cardinal and fundamental truths, and they are stated as preparatory to a brief consideration of the several names of God under which He revealed Himself in the various dispensations found in the Old Testament histories. That God is the same in nature and attributes in both the Old and New Testaments; that, in other words, He is immutable, is a necessity of the perfections of His divine being; but it is yet true that the aspects under which He is presented in different ages vary, and it is these aspects which are embodied in His several names.

ELOHIM is, as often remarked, the common name for God, viewed as the divine Being with whom men as men have to do, and as the One to whom they are accountable. It is a plural word. The singular is Eloah, and this form is often used, especially in the book of Job. Heathen sometimes used the word for their deities, and doubtless from this fact arises the question in Psalm 18:31; "For who is God [Eloah] save the LORD [Jehovah]? or who is a rock save our God [Elohim]?" That is, the true Eloah was Jehovah, and the only rock was Elohim. The reason for the use of the plural word (Elohim) is variously explained. There are those, as might be expected, who contend that it is simply, according to Hebrew usage, a plural of excellence, that the word in this form conveys the excellency or the perfections of the One spoken of; there are others who maintain that it is divinely intended to set forth the Trinity, the unity of the Godhead in the three Persons of the Godhead- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In support of this, the devout reader will not fail to notice the language of Gen. 1:26: "And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." Inasmuch, indeed, as the term expresses all that God is, all the Persons of the Godhead must be included.

It is quite true that this could not be comprehended at the time. It was not indeed until the baptism of our blessed Lord that the whole truth of the Trinity came out. Then God spoke from heaven; His beloved Son was on the earth; and the Holy Spirit descended and abode upon the Son. But now that the full revelation of God has been made, and the Holy Spirit has come, who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God, we can go back, as led and taught of Him, and discover much that could not before have been understood. It is one of the perils of the present moment that the Old Testament scriptures are being limited to the light possessed at the time they were given. The truth is, that their latent meaning can only be apprehended when looking back upon them from the full shining of the light of Christianity. There is no incongruity whatever, therefore, in affirming that God chose the special word Elohim to express the truth of the Trinity. For example, we read in

Genesis that God created the heaven and the earth; and in John's Gospel it is said of the Word, the Word who afterward became flesh, "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." We know, consequently, that the eternal Son is comprised in the word "God" in Genesis; and as we ponder upon it we learn more of the glory of the Person of our Redeemer.

To the patriarchs God made Himself known under another appellation. The first mention of this is found in Gen. 17:1: "The LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God"; that is, EL SHADDAI - God Almighty. But the meaning of the word El is said to be strength, omnipotence; and Shaddai is thought by some to signify the same thing, while others prefer the rendering of all-sufficient, or self-sufficiency. The combination of the two words will, in either case, import divine attributes, as omnipotence and all-sufficiency can only be found in God. These two words are used, for example, in the passage, "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty [El Shaddai]; but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known unto them." Exod. 6:2, 3. (See also Gen. 28:3; 35:11, etc.) When the word "Almighty" stands alone in our translation, it generally represents Shaddai. There is a beautiful combination of this name with that of Jehovah in 2 Corinthians 6, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The God who was known to Abraham as Shaddai, and to Israel as Jehovah, was now declared as Father in that blessed and intimate relationship into which, in His precious grace, He had taken His people in association with Christ.

From what has been already said, it will be understood that JEHOVAH is the name God specially took in His covenant relationship with Israel. It is not, as the reader may easily ascertain, that the word was not used before God communicated it to Moses, but it was now first employed in connection with the chosen nation. The following remarks may help as to this: "In Genesis 2 and 3 it was of all importance to connect Jehovah, Israel's national God, with the one only Creator, God. So in Exod. 9:30, the God of the Hebrews, whose name was Jehovah, is declared to be Elohim.... Otherwise Jehovah is a name, Elohim a being; only Jehovah is Elohim, but the former is a personal name"-the name He took in His dealings and relationship with men, but especially with His people. The word signifies the self-existent One, and as another has observed, is practically translated, "Who is, and was, and is to come." Derived from the verb "to exist," it expresses the eternity and, consequently, the immutability, of His being; and it thus brings before our souls the One who eternally is, who existed before all time, endures through all time, and continues after all time has passed away. He is thus the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last; and the use of these expressions (Rev. 22:13) proves beyond all contradiction that the Jesus of the New is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

El has been referred to in connection with Shaddai, and it is also used with ELION, and is then translated the "Most High God." An examination of the various places in which this name is found will show that it is God's "millennial name above all idolatrous gods, and demons, and all power." It is in this character that God is said to be "possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen. 14:18, 19). Hence it was that Nebuchadnezzar was to be under God's judgment until he should "know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will"; and that this end was accomplished is seen in that, when his understanding returned, he blessed the Most High, etc. (Dan. 4:25-34.) Balaam in like manner uses this title when about to speak of the future glory and

supremacy of Israel among the nations. In Psalm 91 it is found in connection with Shaddai (the Almighty). It says, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High [Elion] shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty [Shaddai]." In Psalm 47:2 it is seen in combination with Jehovah; and it is added, "He is a great King over all the earth." These instances are interesting as proving that it is God, the one God, who reveals Himself to men under these different names in distinct relationships.

Most readers of the Scriptures are familiar with the term ADONAI as another divine name. It is translated in our English version as Lord, but is generally distinguished from Jehovah, which is also rendered LORD, by the use of large and small capital letters. It means, as to the root of the word, Master, Ruler, or Owner; but the form Adonai is only used of God, and of Him as one who has taken power and is in the relationship of Lord to those who call upon His name. It is therefore especially applied to Christ in His exaltation at the right hand of God. This may be seen from a reference to Psalm 110, and to the Lord's citation from it when comforting His adversaries. "The LORD [Jehovah] said unto my Lord [Adonai], Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." v. 1. In Matthew 22 the Lord expressly applies this scripture to Himself, to Himself as Christ the Messiah (vv. 42-44), and employs it to demonstrate that David's son was also David's Lord, that, in a word, He was the Root as well as the Offspring of David. In Gen. 15:2 Abraham addresses God, not as given in our version, Lord God, but as Adonai Jehovah. This example will suffice to show once again that all these divine names are used of the One God, even that of Adonai, which is specially reserved for Christ in His exaltation on high. (The full Adonai character of our blessed Lord is displayed in Phil. 2:9-11.)

There are other divine titles which it will suffice to mention for the reader's consideration. In the poetic books "JAH" is often employed, and it is this word which is embedded in the term Hallelujah, or "Praise ye Jah." Its significance has not been determined; it is generally supposed to be a shortened, or a poetic, form of Jehovah. Then there are the words God used when sending Moses for the deliverance of His people; the first is given as "I AM THAT I AM," and the second as "I AM." Both of these are forms of the same word, signifying existence; the former is sometimes, and perhaps rightly, rendered, "I will be that I will be." The thought expressed in both is akin to the meaning of Jehovah (and necessarily so as coming from the same verb), and speaks of unchanging being, or existence. There is yet another term, not in itself perhaps a divine name or title, but one which from its frequent and special application to God is almost to be so regarded. It is ATTA HU, and it is found in such phrases as, Thou art He, etc. The equivalent is employed in Hebrews 1, "Thou art the same" (v. 12), which indeed is given as the translation of ATTA HU in Psalm 102:27. This term speaks also, as will be at once perceived, of the immutability of God, of the One who always is, and who is ever unchangeable.

We need not further pursue the subject, as enough has been said to point out the various ways in which God has been pleased to reveal Himself under these different names. It is a mark of His tenderness that He has done so, and it proclaims at the same time His unspeakable grace in thus displaying what He is in Himself to His people. He might have concealed Himself forever in the blissful solitude of His own all-sufficing existence; but long before the foundation of the world, in the far distance of a past eternity, He chose us in Christ that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Before, however, these eternal counsels were communicated, the first man, Adam, was brought upon the scene; and after he, the responsible man, had failed, God continued

for four thousand years to wait upon man to see if fruit for Himself could be produced. His trial of man went on until the cross, and then when God had demonstrated that man had lost everything on the footing of responsibility, He revealed all the grace which was in His heart in "the gospel of God... concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." In Him, as we may yet see, God has been fully revealed; and He is also the Man of God's counsels, and in Him all the thoughts of God's heart will be accomplished. The partial unfoldings of the Old Testament have passed away before, or rather have been merged in, Him who is glorified at God's right hand; and this is told out in the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

The Name Above Every Name: Part 10 - a Name Written-Word of God

Rev. 19:12, 13

It is only when we perceive that Revelation is a book of judgment, that we are prepared for the unwonted aspects in which our blessed Lord is here presented. In chapter 1 He is seen as judging in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and in such a manner that even the beloved disciple fell at His feet as dead. Here also-only now in relation to the world-He wears the same judicial mien, betokened by the same feature in that "His eyes were as a flame of fire." Indeed, it is expressly said in this scripture, that "in righteousness He doth judge and make war." It is the same Jesus who once sat in lowly guise upon Samaria's well, but who now, after His long session at God's right hand, is returning to this world which had rejected and crucified Him, to vindicate His rights, and to establish His throne, and thus to glorify God by making good all that He is in His righteous government. All things are to be put under His feet, and in His sudden appearance through the opened heaven, we see Him coming to subdue, enter upon, and possess His rightful inheritance.

Before considering the significance of the names here mentioned, it will be for profit to call attention to the connection. In the previous part of chapter 19, events of great importance in the divine ways are introduced. All heaven is filled with praise when the great corruptress of the earth meets with her righteous doom at the hands of God. Thereupon we have the celebration of the marriage supper of the Lamb, for which His wife had made herself ready, and was, through grace, arrayed in fine linen, clean and white-the righteousnesses of saints. In Ephesians we have the private and intimate presentation of the bride as "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Here it is rather the public marriage, to which guests can be invited, and with which all the heavenly hosts can be in communion. It marks the termination of the time of the patience of Jesus Christ; but if He is about to be exalted in the former scene of His shame and humiliation, He will share the glory of His throne with His beloved bride.

This is the fourth time the opened heaven is mentioned in the New Testament. The first occasion was at the baptism of Jesus, when "He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The lowly Jesus, fulfilling all righteousness, and identifying Himself with His poor and afflicted people-the saints in the earth, and the excellent, in whom was all His delight-is here seen as the Object of the heart of His God. Next, He Himself speaks to Nathanael, and says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter [or henceforth] ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Here on earth-at that time, and also in the future-we apprehend, He is seen as the Object of angelic ministry. At the death of Stephen, the third instance occurs, as thus described, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." The Object of the heart of God has now become the Object of the believer, who has thus, through grace, been associated with God in His own delight in His

beloved Son. Now last, the heavens open that the Son of man may come forth, as we have seen, in righteousness to judge and to make war.

After the personal description is given, it is said, "He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself." The introduction of this statement in this special place, is very striking: "His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns"; and then, before relating that He was "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood," the secret, written name is mentioned. There must be a reason for this; and as the explanation, we cannot forbear giving the words of another: "But, though thus revealed as man, He had a glory none could penetrate into"; and the writer adds in a note, "So it was as to His Person and service. No one knew the Son but the Father. It was the secret of His rejection. He was that, and so necessarily such in the world. But the world under Satan's influence would not have that. In His humiliation His divine glory was maintained in the unsounded depths of His Person. Now He is revealed in glory; but there ever remained what none could search or penetrate into- His own Person and nature.... As revealing God, in grace or power, so as to make Him known, we know Him. But His Person as Son always remains unsearchable. His name is written, so that we know it is unknowable-not unknown, but unknowable." These weighty words deserve the careful consideration of the reader-especially at the present moment -for they contain a wholesome reminder of the inscrutability of the Person of the Son.

First comes the written name, unknown to all but its divine Possessor; and then, in connection with the vesture dipped in blood, it is said, "And His name is called, The Word of God." This must be carefully distinguished from what is found in the first verse of John's gospel. "The Word" there who was with God, and who was God, if it be taken for the moment as a divine title, cannot mean less than that (as has been well said) "He is, and He is the expression of the whole mind that subsists in God"; and this absolutely as relating to all that God is. But in our scripture, while the "Word of God" is the revelation of what God is, it is the revelation of God in a special aspect or character. The very details of His appearing out of heaven sitting on a white horse will make this plain. There is not a word of tenderness, grace, or affection; He is "called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire.... He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood," etc. All speaks of holy and unsparing judgment; of judgment according to the standard of a righteous God; as indeed it is said, "He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (v. 15). It is of all this, of God so presented, that Christ as the Word of God is the revelation. So in the gospels, for example, while Christ was ever God manifest in the flesh, it is in the aspect sometimes of power, sometimes of grace-sometimes as light, and sometimes as love. But in whatever way, He expressed that which was divine; He was never less than all that He is.

Yet another name is given; in verse 16 it is said, "And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." The context explains at once the force of this title, showing that, in harmony with the whole book, it has relation to the earth. In the preceding verse we are told that He will smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron; and the name, or title, we are considering, indicates that it is consequent upon this, that our Lord will establish His throne of universal supremacy upon the earth. Already exalted at the right hand of God, "angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him," He will in the day of which our passage speaks, be exalted also in this world, when He will "have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." It will be the fulfillment of the promise,

"Also I will make Him My firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." Psalm 89:27.

As showing the delight of the Spirit of God in directing our attention to the future glory of Christ in this world, it may be mentioned that twice before in this book it has been introduced. At the very commencement, in John's address to the seven churches, we read, "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the firstbegotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." It is the past of our blessed Lord, what He was when down here as the Faithful Witness; it is the present, what He is as risen from the dead, the firstbegotten; and it is the future, what He will be when He shall have taken His great power, and when all the potentates of the earth shall render their homage at His feet as Lord of them all. In chapter 11 we find also the same blessed era. When the seventh angel sounded, "there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever." v. 15. At the present time, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together"; in that day, "the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (J.N.D. Trans.); and under the rule of the rightful King over all the nations of the earth, the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.

Such is the blessed future which awaits the earth; but before that can arrive, all the believers of this period will have been caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The marriage of the Lamb, as we have seen from our chapter, precedes the appearing of the Lord. The hope of the Church, therefore, is the return of the Lord for His saints. For this they daily wait in communion with His own heart. To be with Him will be the consummation of their joy, inasmuch as it will be His joy in presenting His bride to Himself, which will fill their hearts and overflow in perpetual praise at His feet. But their vision is not bounded by this prospect, glorious as it is; for they look forward also with earnest longing to His appearing in glory, not because, in the grace of their God, they will be displayed in the same glory with Himself, but rather because the time will then have come when their Lord, who was once rejected and crucified, will be publicly exalted and enthroned as King of kings, and Lord of lords. Yea-

"Our longing eyes would fain behold

That bright and blessed brow,

Once wrung with bitterest anguish, wear Its crown of glory now."

(To be continued)

The Name Above Every Name: Part 11 - Name in Their Foreheads

This last mention of "His name" is in connection with the glorified saints. There is, however, another company of saints who are shown to us with this distinguishing mark, with the addition of "the name of His Father." The words are omitted in our Authorized Translation; but, inasmuch as they are accepted in the Revised Version, as well as in most recent translations, they may be received with all confidence as genuine. To begin with the latter, we are introduced to a company of saints, a hundred and forty four thousand in number, who are with the Lamb as He stands on Mount Zion-"having His name, and the name of His Father, written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1; R.V.). That this company occupies a special place of blessedness is seen from the context, and indeed from the express statement that they "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

If we inquire who they are, it will help us to understand the import of the written name upon their foreheads. It is very clear that they are earthly, and not heavenly, saints. In the previous chapter we are permitted to see the terrible power of Satan as embodied in the rule and authority of the first beast, and as wielded by the second, who is the man of sin-the antichrist. It is this incarnation of evil who will cause all within the sphere of his authority to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads, as indicative of their allegiance to the beast. It might seem that evil had completely triumphed; but the opening of chapter 14 reveals to us a multitude who, redeemed from the earth, and during the reign of unchecked evil, are associated with the glories of the Lamb in the very seat of His earthly kingdom. Remembering then that it is in Jerusalem where antichrist will exercise his deputed power, it is evident that this company with the Lamb on Mount Zion is composed of Jewish saints- saints who, whatever their sorrows, have been brought victoriously through the fiery furnace of Jacob's trouble, that time of great tribulation, the like of which will never have been seen, or will ever be, witnessed.

But it is not sufficient to say they are Jewish saints; for we read of another hundred and forty-four thousand in chapter 7-made up of twelve thousand from each tribe. These are the symbolical number of the elect of all Israel; but those in our chapter, it must be recollected, are redeemed from the sphere of antichrist's sway; and hence, since only the two tribes will be in the land at that period, it is another symbolical number, made up of those who were preserved through grace from surrendering to antichrist's claims and threats, and from his moral contaminations. They are in fact the faithful from among Judah and Benjamin, who have now entered upon the glorious recompense of companionship with the Lamb in His exaltation in the kingdom. The very number (as in chapter 7), twelve times twelve, speaks of intensified perfection in governmental administration, and hence of Messiah's perfect reign. It is an unclouded scene of joy and blessing, the bright promise of the issue of all God's ways in government and grace, which we are permitted to behold, ere the desolating storm of judgment breaks upon an apostate people and a rebellious world.

What then, we may now ask, is the import of His name, and His Father's name, upon the foreheads of this blessed company? Two distinct things are indicated, as is apparent from their

having the Lamb's name, and His Father's name. The first is a contrast with what is found in the previous chapter. There we read, as already seen, that men generally receive the mark of the beast in their right hand, or in their foreheads, as the token of their acceptance of his Satanic rule, and as, giving them certain rights and privileges within his realm. In like manner, having the name of the Lamb on their foreheads proclaims that this redeemed company, "the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb," belonged to their glorious Messiah, and that they had maintained their fealty to Him in the midst of the unparalleled sorrows of the dark, persecuting days through which they had been brought. Hated, they are now publicly acknowledged and honored with special marks of favor and approbation by Him for whose sake they had suffered. In addition, they have His Father's name; for "by their open confession of God and the Lamb, they had been witnesses of it, and suffered as Christ had suffered in His life in owning God His Father."

We pass now to another scene. That which we have just considered is on earth, on Mount Sion; this is the heavenly Jerusalem. It is true that the holy city is presented in its relation to the millennial earth; for it is said that the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations. But when we come to the description of the blessedness of its inhabitants in its positive character, this of necessity is eternal. It is remarkable that the eternal state, as given in chapter 21:15, is presented on the side of relief-"There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain"-and that in the heavenly city we have rather what is actually possessed and enjoyed. But even so, it must be remembered that it is not the Father's house; so that, in accordance with the character of the whole book, it is still government (see v. 3); and hence the redeemed here are looked at as servants. It is profitable to observe these distinctions; and we are reminded by them that every aspect of the bliss of the redeemed must be taken into account and combined, in order to comprehend in any measure what God has in store for His people when all His purposes are accomplished.

Three things then mark the condition of the heavenly citizens: "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." They had served Him on earth, it might be thought, and many among them indeed had served Him devotedly, even as Paul was enabled to say, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." But whatever perseverance, spiritual energy, and singleness of eye had characterized such as Paul and others while on earth, their service was never perfect. There was only One, the perfect Servant, who could say, "I do always those things that please Him [the Father]." In heaven, in the new Jerusalem, every one of the countless throng of the redeemed will respond entirely and perfectly to God's will. When, therefore, it says, "His servants shall serve Him," it means that they will serve according to the perfection of the thoughts of God. They will, moreover, see His face; they will enjoy unhindered the intimacy of His presence; for then, like Christ, they will see Him as He is, and be able to enjoy the beatific vision which will be the source of all their delight and their eternal joy.

"Forever on His face to gaze, And meet the full assembled rays, While all His beauty He displays To all the saints in glory."

Finally, and this is our immediate subject, "His name shall be in their foreheads." It has already been shown that the primary signification of the name borne thus upon the forehead is, so to

speak, ownership; that it marks out those who have it as belonging to Christ. And this conveys much; for to be His is really the sum of eternal blessedness, inasmuch as it brings us into everlasting association with Him, both now and also in heaven itself. There is, however, another thought. In chapter 14 the name is "written" on their foreheads; here it is only said to be there. We gather from this distinction that here the predominant feature is moral conformity to the One whose name they bear. As seen again and again in these papers, "name" expresses the truth of the Person; and hence we regard it here that full likeness to Christ is displayed on every redeemed brow. That all believers will be conformed to the image of God's Son, we learn from another scripture (Rom. 8:29); and here we are allowed to behold it actually accomplished. What joy, we may be permitted to say, it will be to the Lord Himself to see, as He surveys the unnumbered hosts of His glorified saints, His own likeness beaming from every face, Himself mirrored and reflected in all the redeemed! It helps us to enter more fully into the words of the prophet, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Then indeed Christ will fill the scene. Old things will have forever passed away, and all things have been made new; for then, not to faith as now, but in actuality, Christ will be everything to all His own, and this in full and unclouded display. To Him be all the praise now and throughout eternity!

The Name Above Every Name: Part 12 - Thou Remainest

Throughout the whole of this year we have been occupied with the name which is above every name, as expressive of the varied glories and excellencies of our blessed Lord and Savior. It has been our delight to pass from one phase to another of His infinite perfections, and to call attention to Himself as the One in whom all God's thoughts and ways are centered, and as the One, also, who is the abiding and eternal portion of the believer's heart. To be overwhelmed in the contemplation of Christ, like the Queen of Sheba was in the presence of the glory of Solomon, is to anticipate the enjoyment of heaven. But to enter in any measure upon this, we must follow our blessed Lord-and this can only be through death and resurrection morally known-into the holiest, into the place where He dwells. There alone can we with unveiled face behold the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. As it is His own desire to have His beloved people thus in the intimacy of His own presence, may He beget in all of us that purpose of heart which will lead us to say with the psalmist, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple."

In our present subject we are invited to consider His immutability, in contrast to the transitory character of this world. Inasmuch as our bodies are linked with this creation, which still "groaneth and travaileth in pain together," there are seasons when we are oppressed with the sense of the corruption and death which are written upon the whole scene. Already under judgment, it will soon vanish; for "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Pet. 3:7. The works of the Lord's own hands, they yet shall perish; as a vesture He will Himself fold them up, and they shall be changed. Is it asked, Wherefore? The reply is, The first creation will share the doom of the first man. For a little season, in testimony to the rights and glory of the Son of man, it will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God; but the judgment pronounced upon it, if postponed, is final and irrevocable.

It is, therefore, an immense consolation to be reminded that the Lord Himself, the Creator, abideth forever. The rapid flight of time, which is ever pressed upon our attention at the close of a year, the constant departure of those we have known and loved, the signs of mortality meeting our gaze at every turn-all these things might well fill our hearts with apprehension and gloom, if our vision were bounded by time's horizon. But thanks be unto God, we have to do with a Person who is above and beyond all change, with One who is ever the same, and whose years never fail; and He is known to our souls as Savior, Redeemer, and Lord. It is, indeed, a characteristic of Christianity that we are shut up-blessedly shut up-to a divine Person, and to a divine Person who, having Himself been here as man in the midst of men, knows all our needs and sorrows. In the very Psalm, indeed, from which the Apostle cites, we find the feelings to which allusion has been made. It will encourage our hearts to ponder a little upon what is there recorded.

It may be first pointed out that the divine title of the Psalm (102) is "A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD"; and let it be remembered that "the afflicted" here is no less a Person than the Messiah in the midst of His sorrow and rejection. But passing by the special circumstances in which He is here seen, and coming to our immediate subject, He says in verse 23, "He weakened My strength in the way; He shortened My days." And then, turning to God, He says, "O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days: Thy years are throughout all generations." How it endears our precious Savior to our hearts as we are permitted to contemplate Him in circumstances so closely resembling those in which we ourselves are; to perceive that He, through His becoming man, was weighted with the feeling and experience of weakness, and the brevity of human life. Yea, as we elsewhere read, He was tempted in all points like as we are, sin apart; and it is on this very account that He is qualified to sympathize with us in our infirmities, and to minister to us the needed succor. Blessed forever be His holy name!

Let us, however, regard the answer to His cry. It commences with verse 25: "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end." We may reverently say that God, in answer to the cry of distress of His anointed, reminds Him of His creatorship; and then, that if all the works of His hands perish, He would endure; that in contrast with their change, decay, and dissolution, He, although now in circumstances of weakness and sorrow, was in His own being the changeless One. Such language can only be understood in the light of the mystery of His Person; but the point we desire now to emphasize is that the comfort and sustainment ministered to His holy soul was in connection with the eternity and immutability of His own being. More may not be said; but oh! how close it brings Him to us in our weakness when we read this "Prayer of the afflicted," and learn the character of the answer He received.

There is another thing to be observed. As the Captain of our salvation, He was made perfect through sufferings; and He has thus become the perfect Exemplar of all His sorrowing and tried saints. But the marvel is, that the consolation ministered to Him while treading the path of rejection, when, to all outward appearance, He labored in vain and spent His strength for naught, is of the same nature as that ministered to us in our pilgrim path. Is He told, as in the Psalm, of His changeless being? So are we reminded, while passing through this world of change, that He remains, and that He is ever the same-the same through all the centuries of time, as through the immeasurable ages of eternity. We are in this way put upon a Rock-a Rock that nothing can ever shake, and on which, reposing in perfect peace, we can contemplate, without a single apprehension, the dissolution of all things. Christ remains, if we lose all besides; nay, we should rather say, Let all else vanish from our gaze, for we want nothing since we possess Christ.

All this does but teach us that we already belong to another scene, which is as unchanging as the unchanging Christ. It was this lesson in which the Lord so carefully instructed His disciples. In John 13, for example, the whole significance of His washing their feet might be thus expressed-"If I cannot longer remain with you in your circumstances, I will show you how you may follow and have part with Me in that new place to which I am going." So also, when Mary. Magdalene would have detained Him here, He said, "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and

your God." It is the same lesson in another way. He puts His disciples, by this message, into His own place and relationship in association with Himself, and this is necessarily in heaven. Not only, therefore, do we belong to another scene- the one outside this world-but the Lord would have us follow Him to it, and be in His company there, even while treading the sands of the wilderness.

"Thou remainest" is thus full of blessed sustainment and encouragement. Not only does it afford us a secure and immovable foundation in the midst of change and unrest, but it also attracts our hearts to that new place, and that new order of things, which He has formed and inaugurated in virtue of His death and resurrection, and where He Himself is the Center of all the glory which floods the whole scene. For, as we elsewhere read, He has ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. Well then may we accept death upon everything here, for already the light of another world has dawned upon our souls - a new world where neither change, nor sorrow, nor death can ever enter, and where we shall be forever with Christ and conformed to His own image. Of this new creation, He is the beginning, as the firstborn from the dead, and He remaineth. Yea, as we are permitted to address Him, "Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end."

In conclusion, the writer, would affectionately inquire whether the reader •is consciously reposing upon Him who is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. There is no other foundation for our souls before God. Building upon it, we are secured both for time and for eternity; for God is then for us; and if He be for us, who can be against us?

The Name Above Every Name: Part 2 - Call His Name Jesus

"Thou shalt call His Name JESUS." Matt. 1:21

"When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Gal. 4:4. And it is of this mystery, the groundwork of redemption, that Matthew writes in this chapter. There are indeed other characteristics of the divine and holy Child here mentioned. As this gospel specially presents Christ as the Messiah, in the fulfillment of promise to the Jewish nation, His lineage, as born into this world, is traced down from the two great roots of Jewish promise, Abraham and David. Not only therefore does Matthew show Him to us as "come" of a woman, and "come" under law, but also as the promised Seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, and as Son of David, and hence as heir to David's throne and kingdom. It is thus a chapter in which the divine and human glories of our blessed Lord are mingled and displayed. By "mingled" we simply mean that the character of the Person of Christ is such that all that He is as God and as man is told out in His name and in His work. For example, if we think of Him as the Offspring of David, we are at once reminded that He is also David's Root, that David's Son is also David's Lord.

This will be very clearly seen by a consideration of the meaning of the name Jesus, which Joseph was instructed to give to the Child when He should be born. As may be seen from Heb. 4:8, Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, or Jehoshua, which signifies "Jehovah is salvation," or "whose salvation is Jehovah." There is therefore ample justification for the common observation that the name Jesus means Jehovah the Savior. If so, what a subject for contemplation, yea, and for adoration, is thus brought before our souls! A child born into the world, of lowly parentage in man's esteem, is declared, divinely declared, to be Jehovah the Savior! Yes, the God who heard the groaning of His people Israel in Egypt, who saw their affliction, heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, knew their sorrows, and came down to redeem them out of Egypt, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; He who said unto Moses, "I am the LORD [Jehovah]: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them." (Exod. 3:6-8; 6:2, 3.) It was He, the same God, the same Jehovah, the El Shaddai known to the patriarchs, who now came into this world as a Babe. But if a Babe, He came, blessed be His name forever, as the Savior of His people. Surely we may say that the shadows were fleeing away, and that the darkness which had hitherto shrouded God from His people, was fast disappearing. It was indeed the blessed dawn of the day of grace.

The moment we speak of the birth of Jehovah the Savior, the mystery of the incarnation constrains our attention. It had long been foretold, and, so far from its being veiled under dubious language, it was exactly and minutely described, so that Matthew could write, "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Even the very place of His birth had been foretold: "But thou, Bethlehem

Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Mic. 5:2. Moreover, the holy nature of His humanity was by no means dimly shadowed forth in the type of the meat offering, especially in the unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, telling out as it did the truth communicated to Mary by the angel, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35. It is the miracle of miracles, and for that very reason the revelation of the heart of God, when looked back upon in the light of the purpose of His coming into the midst of sinful men.

Before entering upon the purpose of His advent, it may be profitable to dwell upon some of the circumstances of His birth. There was the greatest contrast imaginable at the time between heaven and earth. All heaven (and what wonder?) was astir and in movement; but the whole earth, save a few pious souls, was still and almost unexpectant. The angel of the Lord sped on his joyful way to apprise not the governing powers or the great of the earth, but a few godly shepherds, of the marvelous event: "Fear not:" he said unto them, "for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all [the] people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord," etc. The angel of Jehovah was not alone, for as soon as he had announced the glad tidings, a multitude of the heavenly host praised God and said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will [or "pleasure," or "delight"] toward [in] men." As has been strikingly said, "God has so manifested Himself by the birth of Jesus, that the hosts of heaven, long familiar with His power, could raise their chorus... and every voice unites in sounding forth these praises. What love like this love? and God is love. What a purely divine thought that God has become man." And yet this stupendous event had nothing in it to compel the observation of men. Busy with their own thoughts and objects, they did not even perceive it, though it took place in their midst; and so absorbed were they in their self-seeking, that there was no room for the infant Savior in the inn! Such are men, although among them were the objects of God's eternal counsels in grace, which He was about to accomplish through the One who, while the Creator of all things, was yet born into the world a homeless stranger!

The name Jesus was given in connection with His work; "for," it was added, "He shall save His people from their sins." The term "His people" will, in this gospel, undoubtedly mean Israel; and indeed, in the angelic announcement to the shepherds in Luke, it says that the good tidings of great joy were for all the people; that is, for the Jews. Not that the object of the Lord's coming into the world is in either case to be limited to the chosen people, but in these scriptures they only are in view. The wider aspect is stated by John when, in allusion to the prophecy of Caiaphas that "Jesus should die for that nation," he adds, "And not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." This makes it plain, moreover, that the death of Christ - His finished work which He accomplished in and through His death - is the alone foundation on which He will save His people from their sins. We thus read •in Leviticus 16, after the details given concerning the rights and sacrifices, together with the confession of the peoples' sins by the high priest on the great day of atonement, "For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD." v. 30. Nor can this foundation truth be too constantly insisted upon; for as it is written concerning sins in the old dispensation, "Without shedding of blood is no remission," so

now it is equally true that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, alone cleanses from all sin.

When, therefore, the angel said, "He shall save His people from their sins," he looked onward, or at least the mind of the Spirit had respect in the words, to a time beyond the cross. For Israel could not be saved, as the prophets plainly testified, apart from repentance and the efficacy of the atonement. Simeon, when he enjoyed the unspeakable privilege of holding the Lord's Christ in his arms, plainly foretold also that the glory of Jehovah's people Israel would be accomplished through the rejection of the holy Babe on His presentation to the people. The sufferings of Christ must precede His glories, whether in heaven or on the earth; even as He Himself said to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" It was this fact that tested the hearts of men, and called forth their determined enmity. If they could have taken Jesus by force and made Him a King, and if He would but have placed Himself at their head and led them, all carnal as they were, against their enemies, and delivered them by His power, they would gladly have hailed Him as their Messiah, even if they had immediately after rebelled against His authority. But He who came as Jehovah the Savior must first stand in and repair the breach which the sins of His people had made between them and their God. And so fully did He take up their cause and responsibility, that, as in their place, He cried, "O God, Thou knowest My foolishness; and My sins are not hid from Thee." Psalm 69:5. Blessed Lord, we cannot fathom Thy sorrow and grief, but we can thank Thee in that Thou madest the sins of Thy people Thine own, and hast borne them away forever.

Considering then this scripture in its application to Israel, it will refer to the salvation of the earthly people from their sins - from their sins and their consequences - and to their restoration and blessing in a future day in the land of promise. It is indeed in one aspect what Zacharias prophesied when his tongue was loosed at the circumcision of his child, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David;... that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;... that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." Luke 1:68-75. First then Jesus will save His people from their sins before God; for a part of the new covenant runs, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34); and, moreover, He will save them from the consequences of their sins in delivering them out of the hands of their enemies, in gathering them out from every land where they have been scattered, and in establishing them in their own land in blessing under His own peaceful and glorious reign. All this would have been fulfilled to them at once, had they but received their Messiah; and even after they had crucified Him, had they but owned their guilt, and bowed in heart to the testimony of the apostles, their sins would have been blotted out, and the times of refreshing would have come from the presence of the Lord in connection with the return of Christ (Acts 3); but, alas! through their unbelief they forfeited all these blessings, and they have now to wait until, wrought upon by the Spirit of God, they will cry in the gladness of their hearts, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the LORD."

Still, beloved reader, while it is true that this promise refers primarily to Israel, let it not be forgotten that the same glorious work, which constitutes the foundation on which their sins will be removed, is the only ground on which any of us can know forgiveness. Through Israel's fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles; and hence it is that the Apostle could write to the Corinthians that it was

delivered to him 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. Well then may we praise God continually for His wondrous grace which took occasion through the unbelief of Israel to reveal all His purposes concerning those who should be heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ; and well too may our hearts be filled with gratitude at the mention of the name of Jesus, for He it is who has secured everything for us.

"Name of Jesus! highest name!

Name that earth and Heaven adore!

From the heart of God it came,

Leads me to God's heart once more.

"Only Jesus! fairest name,

Life, and rest, and peace, and bliss;

Jesus evermore the same,

He is mine, and I am His."

The Name Above Every Name: Part 3 - Call His Name Emmanuel

"They shall call His Name Emmanuel."

It has already been pointed out that the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem was in fulfillment of this prophecy. Not that the birth in, and by, itself contained its accomplishment; it was rather its pledge and guarantee. The meaning of the name, as divinely interpreted, is "God with us"; and this enables us to see that it looks forward to the full consequences for Israel of the introduction of their Messiah into this world; that, in other words, the Emmanuel name of our blessed Lord will only be realized in connection with the establishment of His glorious throne on earth, when He will make good all that God is in government, and when, as with His people, "His name shall endure forever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed." Psalm 72:17. It carries with it, therefore, the fruition of His death for "that nation," and the promise of His personal presence with His earthly people. It is of that time the prophet speaks when he says, "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." Isa. 12:6.

A reference to the prophecy itself, together with its context, will make this abundantly evident. Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, was at that time upon the throne of Judah. He "did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel." 2 Kings 16:2, 3. However, notwithstanding his wickedness and apostasy, God still waited with much longsuffering, and forbore to deal with His guilty servant. Yea, rather, on Ephraim and Syria entering into a confederacy against the house of David, and going up to besiege Jerusalem, Jehovah sent His servant Isaiah with a message of encouragement, assuring Ahaz that the designs of his enemies should not prosper. The prophet added, at the same time, the warning word, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Ahaz might be delivered from the present peril, but unless he turned to and stayed himself upon the word of the Lord, he should not escape his merited chastisement. (See 2 Chron. 28.)

Yet again the Lord sought, in His tender mercy, to reach the heart and conscience of the offending monarch. God would condescend if Ahaz requested it, to give him a sign, either in the depth or in the height above, to certify him of the sure fulfillment of His word. The heart of Ahaz had turned to false gods and, thus hardened, he refused, though under the pretext of piety, the offered intervention, saying, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD." The searcher of hearts was not to be deceived, and, after a solemn admonition, the prophet announced that the Lord Himself would give a sign. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." It is in this that the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, is unfolded. David's house might fail in their responsibility, as they grievously did, and forfeit everything; but, thereon God, acting from His own heart, and according to His purposes, could step in, and through the advent of Jehovah the Savior - through His rejection, death, and

resurrection - accomplish all the counsels of His grace. The birth of Immanuel would thus change everything. Those who were false to their trust would be punished as was Ahaz; but Immanuel would secure everything, and vindicate and glorify the name of God in government upon the earth.

But there lies a long, weary path for Israel, because of their unbelief, between the birth of Immanuel and the glory of the kingdom. This was plainly foretold by the prophet in connection with the very prophecy under consideration. The careful reader will observe that the first invasion of the land by the Assyrian, bringing in utter desolation in its unchecked success (Isa. 7:17), does but shadow forth another assault in the last days, when he and his confederates shall be utterly broken in pieces. They may take counsel together, but it shall come to naught; they may speak the word, but it shall not stand, for "God [is] with us" (Immanuel). Before that time - the final destruction of Israel's enemy - He who is born of the virgin, and named Immanuel, is seen in rejection. The transition to this is exceedingly beautiful. The prophet was instructed of the Lord not to "walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the LORD of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread." Isa. 8:11-13. But this instantly brings in separation, distinguishing as it does a remnant from the mass of the people. Accordingly we read, "And He shall be for a sanctuary" (for all those who sanctify and fear Him); "but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." As indeed Simeon prophesied, "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against... that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Immanuel came. The sanctuary of those who had waited for Him, He is the true Center around whom His people are gathered; and here, for the first time, He Himself speaks, and calls them "My disciples." And He names them such in connection with "the testimony," and plainly states that the truth of that day, the law as well as the testimony, is entrusted and confined to the remnant, now His disciples. It was so also in the day of David's rejection. In the cave of Adullam, when everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, had gathered themselves unto him, and he became their captain, we find that the prophet Gad was also there; and immediately after Abiathar the priest is driven to the same company, which now possessed all the forms of God's testimony in the persons of the king, the prophet, and the priest. In like manner Anna the prophetess was with the few who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. It must be ever so, that those who are in separation from evil, and are in communion with the mind of God concerning His Christ, and concerning the state of things round about them, should be the depositaries of the testimony for the times in which they are living. The reason is that Christ Himself is with them. He loves all His people; but He only identifies Himself with the separated remnant, as in verse 18 of this chapter. That here and there much truth may be found outside of them is unquestionable; but only with them will be seen God's special teaching for the moment, or the truth held and presented in its due proportions. The testimony will be bound up, and the law will be sealed up, among the Lord's disciples in an evil day, because as already said, He Himself is in their midst.

The state of things at the time of which Isaiah speaks is unfolded in the following verses, and let it again be recalled that it is Christ Himself who is the speaker. He says, "And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him. Behold, I and the

children whom the LORD hath given Me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion." In the epistle to the Hebrews, parts of these two verses are quoted, to show the Lord's complete identification as Man with His people, with the true remnant gathered out from among the Jewish nation (chap. 2:13); and this as preparatory to the object of His death; namely, to "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." But we will not pursue these interesting circumstances further than to call attention to the wondrous fact that the One who was thus as regards God in perfect dependence as Man, and hence waiting upon Jehovah, and as regards men despised and rejected, was at the same time no less a personage than the Immanuel of Isaiah's prophecy; and that, in this path of rejection, He was experiencing some of those sufferings which must precede His glories.

In chapter 9 the people that walk in darkness see a great light, and "they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." For the fulfillment of this glorious prophecy, Matthew records that Jesus left Nazareth, and came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the seacoast, in the borders of Zebulun and Nephthalim. (See Isa. 9:1.) The moment Isaiah proclaims the appearance of the Messiah as light in the midst of darkness, he contemplates its full consequences in the results of the deliverance which Messiah will accomplish in the last days. The yoke of the Assyrian being broken, all the brightness of the glory of the divine Person of the Messiah shines out in the blessing of His people. And all this blessing is connected with the birth of Christ into this world. "For unto us," the prophet says, "a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." All these names are given in connection with His kingdom in this world, for the prophet proceeds: "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever." Chap. 9:6, 7.

It is evident, therefore, that Immanuel, "God with us," is the name belonging to our blessed Lord in connection with the earthly people, and that they will not enter into its full and blessed significance until after He has taken His great power, and when He shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.

Who then is Immanuel? His birth is predicted in Isa. 7:14, and, after detailing the circumstances of His rejection in the following chapter, the prophet foretells the establishment of His kingdom in chapter 9. Together with this he takes occasion, in a passage already quoted, to present a series of titles, or names, which are expressive of the infinite and divine character of Immanuel's Person. Let us pass them briefly under review. The first is "Wonderful," a word used oftentimes for that which excites astonishment, or admiration. Sometimes it is employed to denote a miracle, and nothing so awakens the attention as a miraculous display of power. And what miracle is so great as that of the incarnation? What could produce such wonder as the fact that Immanuel could be born of a virgin? Then He is called "Counselor." Divine wisdom is indicated by this word, as, for example, where it says, "The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD." Isa. 11:2. The appellation "The mighty God" proclaims its own significance, for there could not be a more distinct declaration of His deity; nor does the following term, "The everlasting

Father," or "Father of eternity" (J.N.D. Trans.), speak less plainly, inasmuch as it sets forth the eternity of His being. Finally, He is "The Prince of Peace," a title which indicates the Solomon character of His reign, so admirably described in Psalm 72.

It may be permitted to us in conclusion to inquire why such a number of names should be combined. The answer surely is, that it is only by the contemplation of the rays of Immanuel's glory separately and singly that any conception can be formed of the truth of His Person. However He may be presented, in whatever aspect or relationship, all that He is is there under the special aspect; and we are reminded of this by such passages as the one under consideration. It is indeed one of the fatal mistakes of these modern days to take some one feature of the life or Person of our blessed Lord, and to regard it as the whole truth. He is the living Word, and it is only in all that speaks of Him that He can be fully discovered; and it is because of our feebleness that the Spirit of God calls our attention now to one aspect, and now to another; now to one feature, or trait, or attribute of His Person, and now to another. But He is still beyond all our thoughts, seeing that He is divine, "very God and very man"; and hence it is written, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father."

The Name Above Every Name: Part 4 - Name As Ointment Poured

In this language is portrayed the preciousness of Christ (as the Bridegroom) to the bride. This will be at once perceived if the context be examined. "Let him kiss me," cries the bride, "with the kisses of his mouth: for [now addressing him directly] thy love is better than wine." S. of Sol. 1:2. It is not so much the love itself, as the enjoyment of the love, of which she speaks; this it is which is "better than wine." Every renewed heart will respond to this statement; for while the love of Christ is ever beyond all our thoughts, infinite and unspeakable, it is only as we enjoy it that we in any measure enter into or appreciate it. But when the heart expands in the power of the Spirit to its blessed influences and constraint, when it opens without let or hindrance to the inflowing of its mighty tides, then the soul learns experimentally the marvelous character of the love of Christ which passes understanding. Another thing is equally true. The more we taste of the love of Christ, the more we desire it. Every experience of it begets an ardent longing for a larger measure of it. Thus, if the bride had not previously known something of the bridegroom's affection, she would never have uttered this passionate desire.

It is, moreover, through the heart that all divine knowledge is received; and hence, as here, the bride passes from the expression of her estimate of the enjoyment of the bridegroom's love, to a declaration of the effect of his excellencies and perfections. Her heart apprehends, through the enjoyment of his love, the savor of his "good ointments." Still, it may be remarked, in the language of another, that "however strong the bride's affections may be, they are not developed according to the position in which Christian affections, properly so-called, are formed. They differ in this respect. They do not possess the profound repose and sweetness of an affection that flows from a relationship already formed, known, and fully appreciated, the bonds of which are formed and recognized, that counts upon the full and constant acknowledgment of the relationship, and that each party enjoys, as a certain thing, in the heart of the other. The desire of one who loves and is seeking the affections of the beloved object, is not the sweet, entire, and established affection of the wife, with whom marriage has formed an indissoluble union. To the former, the relationship is only in desire, the consequence of the state of heart; to the latter the state of heart is the consequence of the relationship."

The distinction should be well weighed and apprehended, for it contains the key to the interpretation of the "Song of songs." But it is still true, whether in the heart of the bride or in that of the Christian, that love is the means of, the capacity for, divine knowledge; that, in a word, he that loves most knows most. (See 1 Cor. 8:1-3; Eph. 1:18 - reading "heart" instead of "understanding.") Mary Magdalene is a striking illustration of this point. Peter and John had more light than she, for they (or certainly John) had seen that the sepulcher was empty, and had believed, while she was in utter darkness as to the resurrection. And yet it was to Mary that the Lord revealed Himself. The two disciples, having satisfied themselves that the sepulcher was bereft of its prey (and John, at least, believing that the Lord had risen Victor over death), "went away again unto their own home." But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping. Engrossed, in the intensity of her affection, with her Object, she was rooted to the spot; having lost Christ, she had lost everything, and all the

world was but a sepulcher to her if Christ were not living. The state of her heart was right, although her spiritual understanding was not enlightened; and hence it was that the Lord could come and disclose Himself to her, and make her the glad messenger of the blessed tidings that henceforward He associated His brethren with Himself in heaven, before His Father and God, in His own place and relationship.

If the reader has understood the divine principles which have been enunciated, he will easily comprehend the language of the bride, which must now be considered. "Because of the savor of thy good ointments," she says, "thy name is as ointment poured forth." The "good ointments" will represent for us the blessed fragrance of His excellent perfections, as seen in His life, in His acts of tenderness and grace, as well as in His words, and in His walk of entire dependence and obedience before God in His pathway through this world. They will, doubtless, be apprehended and enjoyed in the intimacy of His own presence, in His manifested relationships with the soul, in His ways and personal dealings. The bride, indeed, could not have known the savor of His good ointments in any other way. And it is ever true that the nearer we are to Christ, the more fully we enter upon the experience of the beloved disciple, who was admitted to the intimacy of reposing upon the Lord's breast, and the clearer will be our perception of His beauty and grace. We may be much impressed by report and testimony, even when at a distance like the Queen of Sheba; but it is only when, like her, we hear and see for ourselves, that we are lost in adoration in the presence of the fragrance of the good ointments. If, therefore, we would be absorbed with the sense of His graces and beauties, we must press on with the two disciples, drawn onward by His attractions, to the place where He dwells. Having part with Him there, the savor of His excellencies will constitute the perpetual joy and rejoicing of the soul.

Before proceeding further it should be noticed that the sweet savor of the life of Christ, as may be gathered from Leviticus 2, was first and foremost for God. The priests might eat of the fine flour mingled with oil, of which the meat offering was composed, but all the frankincense thereof was to be burned with a part of the offering upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord. How blessed to know this! If there had not been a single soul upon the face of the earth to delight in the savor of the good ointments of Christ, His life would not have been in vain, inasmuch as it brought glory to God, and filled His heart with infinite joy. No! our blessed Lord could not have wasted His sweetness upon, the desert air, because there was One whose eyes ever rested upon Him with unspeakable complacency, noting with joy the perfection of His every thought, and act, and word, and step. It was this which drew forth from the overflowing heart of God the words, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And the more Christ was tested-and He was tested in every variety of way, even by the holy fire of the altar itself - the more abundantly did His sweet savor flow forth to gratify the heart of His God. We call attention to it, because if the bride is, if we ourselves are, permitted to participate in the enjoyment of the sweet savor of His life, to feed upon the perfections of His entire devotedness to the glory of His God, it is only because God has first had His portion, and because He, in His ineffable grace, has called us to share in His own delights in the pathway and Person of His beloved Son.

Remark also that it is through the savor of the good ointments that His name, the revelation of all that He is, is spread abroad, as the fragrance of ointment poured forth. In this way, as expressed in the hymn-

"Like fragrance on the breezes His name is spread abroad."

Illustrations of this abound in the gospels. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria." As we read in another place, "And from thence He arose, and went into the borders of Tiro and Sidon, and entered into a house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid." No! blessed Lord, the savor of Thy good ointments has gone abroad on every hand, making Thee everywhere known, so that Thy name had become as the sweet fragrance of ointment poured forth to all who were burdened with distress and sorrow, to the weary and needy souls among Thy people.

This is doubtless only one side of this precious truth, for what our scripture brings before us is rather the soul's entrancement with the preciousness of Christ through the apprehension of His various excellencies as displayed in Himself and His ways. Still, it is always through our needs that we first get to Christ and learn what He is in His love and grace. Then, when our needs have been met and satisfied, we are at leisure, set at liberty from ourselves, and at liberty in His presence, to contemplate Himself. The savor of His good ointments, indeed, scarcely steals into the soul with its gladdening refreshment until every question affecting ourselves and our relationship with God has been settled. In rare cases Christ Himself may be known at the commencement of the spiritual life; but generally speaking it is a troubled conscience which has to be appeased, through the efficacy of the blood of Christ, before we are free to survey His glorious perfections. Then, as these surprise and awaken the soul's delight, His name, even the very mention of it, will fill our hearts with the sense of its sweetness and fragrance, and produce such emotions as can only be expressed in adoring worship at His feet.

Another thing should be mentioned. The savor of the good ointments of Christ may flow out through the holy lives of His people. Every trait, every perfection exhibited by Himself in His walk through this world may be reproduced in those that are His. Look, for example, at the precepts and exhortations of the epistles. Every one of them has been perfectly exemplified in Christ; and unless this is remembered, so that they may be associated with Himself as the living Word, they will become hard and legal obligations. Christ in us, Christ our life, as set forth in Colossians, is to be followed by the display of Christ through us, in the power of the Holy Spirit. For this we need to be much in His company; for the more we are with Him and occupied with Him, the more we shall be transformed into His likeness, and the more certainly will the savor of His good ointments be spread abroad. And this will be a mighty testimony to what He is; for in this case His name will, through us, be as ointment poured forth; the sweet savor of the name of Christ will flow forth from our walk as well as from our words. The Apostle Paul uses the very words in speaking of his preaching, when he says, "We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ"; and in a subsequent chapter (2 Cor. 4) he points out that testimony is connected with the life as well as with the lip. As we meditate upon it, may we not say, What a privilege! What a mission, to be sent out into the world to make known the savor of the good ointments of Christ, that His name may, through us, be as ointment poured forth!

The effect of this has yet to be noticed; "Therefore do the virgins love thee." The fragrance of the name of Jesus attracts the hearts of the virgins - not of all God's people, be it observed, but only of the virgins. A very distinct thought is connected in Scripture with the virgin. It is character, moral

character, speaking as it does of the absence of defilement, of uncontamination with the polluting influences of the world (see Rev. 14:4). Virgins, therefore, stand in this scripture for those who have been enabled, through grace, to maintain a holy separation from the defilements of the scene through which they are passing, those whose hearts have been kept true to Christ, and guarded in loyalty to Him through the sense of His claims, and of His love. A heart possessed of Christ is fortified against the most seductive allurements of the world. It is absorbing affection which always distinguishes the virgin; and this affection is ever intensified and deepened by every new discovery of the perfectness of Christ. In other words, those who partake of the virgin character always respond to the display of the preciousness of Christ. He being the sole Object of their hearts, they are in the condition of soul to enter into and enjoy His beauties. They will detect His presence, the blessed fragrance of His words and His acts, while others will observe nothing. They live in His presence; they are wholly for Him; and hence it is the delight of Christ to disclose Himself to them in such attractive ways as to increase and elicit their affections toward Himself.

It follows from what has been said, that the state of our souls may be discerned by the effect produced upon us by the name of Jesus. If our hearts are careless and irresponsive when He is the subject of conversation or presentation, we cannot be in communion with the heart of God. Why, even the name of a beloved object on earth will produce pleasurable emotions. How much more should the name of Christ, the Object of God's heart - and also of ours if we know Him - awaken within us holy feelings of delight, which can only be expressed in praise and adoration!

The Name Above Every Name: Part 5 - Name Above Every Name

Sometimes the question is raised as to what this name is; but whether it be the name of JESUS - as seems probable, if the amended reading be adopted - or not, its significance is very apparent. A passage from the epistle to the Ephesians will explain this. In connection with the display of the exceeding greatness of God's power "to us-ward who believe, according to... His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead," the Apostle proceeds, "and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Chap. 1:19-21. Here the meaning evidently is that, whatever the exaltation or dignity of any of the heavenly hierarchies or intelligences, Christ as the glorified Man has been set above them all. Among the vast number of celestial beings He is absolutely supreme. The rendering "far above" may not be exactly justified by the Greek word used; but we cannot doubt that our translators seized its spirit in seeking to express that there was no second to the glorified Christ, that His exaltation is so unspeakable that all the highest gradations of angelic existences are far beneath His feet. Similarly in Philippians "the name which is above every name" will betoken the absolute supremacy in the whole universe of the glorified Christ as Lord. Nothing short of this will satisfy the terms of this scripture.

This will be more readily understood if we consider the place and connection in which these words are found. In a sense, the passage from verse 5 to verse 11 is complete in itself. It grows out of previous exhortations; and herein is the marvel that all this blessed unfolding of the Person, of the character, of the incarnation of Christ, His humiliation and consequent exaltation, should be given to enforce the Apostle's exhortation that the mind "which was also in Christ Jesus," seen in His coming "from Godhead's fullest glory, down to Calvary's depth of woe," should be before believers as their example! Let us then ponder upon it, for the more it is considered, the more deeply will it impress itself upon our souls. In a past eternity He, who has been down here as the humbled One, was - subsisted - in the form of God. Such a statement, however far beyond the utmost range of all our thoughts, cannot signify less than His absolute and essential deity. It speaks of His eternal existence as God, even as John says of the Word, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." On this blessed truth hangs the whole truth of revelation and redemption. To surrender it would be to lose the sun from the solar system, and thus to bring in darkness, chaos, and destruction. On this very account, controversy has raged in all ages around the Person of Christ. Now His humanity, and now His deity, has been obscured if not denied. Faith meets all the arguments of man by the simple statements of the Word of God.

If, however, the deity of our blessed Lord is here introduced, it is but to magnify His grace and self-humiliation; for the assertion of it is followed immediately by words of transcendent importance. First, He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but," second, "made Himself of no reputation," or, more literally and exactly, "emptied Himself." The first clause will mean that although He subsisted in the form of God, He did not use it for self-exaltation, "did not," as one has translated it, "esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God." It is, doubtless, a

contrast to Adam, who fell into Satan's snare of seeking to exalt himself, to be "as gods, knowing good and evil." Adam, being a man, sought to exalt himself; Christ being God, humbled Himself. How blessed the contrast! This was the mind which was in Christ Jesus; and the next clause - "but emptied Himself" - contains the first expression of that mind. It must be with unshod feet (for the place is holy) that such a statement must be approached. Of what then did He who subsisted in the form of God empty Himself? It has been lately written that He emptied Himself of "divine prerogatives"; others have taught that the emptying included His divine attributes. Far be the thought! To admit it is certainly to becloud the essential truth of His deity, and to open the door to rationalism in its worst forms. For what are attributes? They are the characteristics of deity, so that to empty Himself of the former is to lay aside the latter. No! a thousand times, no! As another has said, "The essential being of Godhead cannot change. His emptying Himself applied to the form."

The next sentences will make this plain, describing as they do the process and the effect of the emptying: He "took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made [rather, became- it was His own voluntary and, indeed, divine act] in the likeness of men." It was as God He emptied Himself, and now these words present Him to us after He had done so; for we see Him in the likeness of men, and in form as a bondsman. This includes the whole truth of the incarnation, and through it we are enabled to form some estimate, however inadequate, of the immensity of the descent from "the form of God" to "the form of a servant." None but God was equal to such condescension and grace, for it was really the exhibition of divine love in the midst of sinners, and none but God could have made such a stoop, for man is limited to his own form and mode of existence. In the fact of the incarnation, therefore, we behold one of the glorious mysteries of redemption. And while unable to grasp its full and far-reaching significance, we yet learn that the lower Christ went down, the more brightly the effulgence of His divine glory shone forth! For God is light and God is love; and where do we behold this? Surely in Him who took upon Him the bondsman's form. In every step of His pathway, in His words of grace and truth, in His works of power and mercy, light and love in all their perfection may be perceived by the opened eye; and the divinely instructed heart is constrained to exclaim, Lo! God is there.

As God, it has already been said, He emptied Himself; and now we learn that as man He humbled Himself. Indeed, the whole life of our blessed Lord as man is compressed into words, "He humbled Himself"; for it is not, as in our translation, "and became obedient unto death," but "becoming" so, that is in humbling Himself; and then to bring out the full character of the humiliation, it is added, "even the death of the cross." It was a low place indeed He took when He assumed a bondsman's form; but how much lower when, "being found in fashion as a man," He went down to the shameful death of the cross! And let us again remind ourselves in our meditations, while we wonder and adore in the presence of such infinite condescension, that Christ is here presented as our example. The question may well be asked, in the beautiful language of another; "Are not our affections occupied and assimilated in dwelling with delight on what Jesus was here below? We admire, are humbled, and become conformed to Him through grace. Head and source of this life in us, the display of its perfection in Him draws forth and develops its energies and lowliness in us. For who could be proud in fellowship with the humble Jesus? Humble, He would teach us to take the lowest place, but that He has taken it Himself, the privilege of His perfect grace. Blessed Master, may we at least be near to and hidden in Thee."

Such is the wondrous foundation on which the present exaltation of Christ is based. That there is a direct connection between the two is seen from the word "wherefore," which also expresses to us the estimate of God's heart of the self-humbling of Christ. Many grounds of the glory of Christ are given in Scripture. His worthiness, for example, is celebrated in Revelation 5, in virtue of the redemption which He had secured through His death, and through the efficacy of His blood. He Himself claims to be glorified in John 17, because He had glorified the Father on the earth, and had finished the work which had been given Him to do.

Here it is quite another aspect. It is God Himself stepping in, in the joy of His heart, in His delight in the One who had so humbled Himself, and raising Him to those heights of glory which He now occupies; and the act proclaims aloud throughout the whole universe that no other position would have been commensurate with His deserts, that He who went down the lowest of all must have the highest place. Morally it is the exemplification of the principle, in all its perfection, which the Lord Himself enunciated - "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." It may then be said that His being highly exalted was but His meed and crown. The Apostle in his epistle to the Ephesians touches upon another side of this great subject. There he tells us that He who descended into the lower parts of the earth is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things (chap. 4:9, 10). While we may not be able to fathom this profound language, it cannot mean less than that, in virtue of the humiliation of Christ, and of the work He thereby effected for the accomplishment of the counsels of God, He will eventually flood the whole universe with His own redemption glory. And this, and nothing short of this, will be God's answer to the humiliation of His beloved Son.

Returning to our scripture, we learn that "the name which is above every name" is given Him as a part of His exaltation; nay, that it is God's own estimate of what was due to the One who had humbled Himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It is thus the worthiness of Christ shown out by the place which God has given Him to occupy. We say, "given Him to occupy," because the presentation here is that of His exaltation as man, as the consequence of His perfect obedience and entire devotedness to the glory of God through the whole of His pathway on earth up to and including death. What "the name" is, or whether it is the name of Jesus, it has already been remarked, cannot be decided; and, indeed, it is the thing signified to which the Spirit of God would direct our attention. The significance, let it be repeated, is that, whatever exalted beings may surround the heavenly throne, the glorified Jesus is above and beyond them all. The name accorded to Him, in virtue of His humiliation, bespeaks a dignity which far transcends the most exalted ranks of the celestial host, and tells, moreover, that He is supreme in all the worlds which constitute the universe of God. If then this position which He now fills is expressive of God's delight in the once humbled Christ, will it not also awaken the delight of God's people as they contemplate Him in that state and glory? It is in the grace of our God we are called to share in His own delight in His beloved Son; and the enjoyment of this, however feeble its measure, is really the foretaste --the commencement - of heavenly joys which, filling the heart even While treading the sands of the wilderness, can only find an outlet through the channel of worship and song.

The Name Above Every Name: Part 6 - at the Name of Jesus

If God gives Christ the place of universal and absolute supremacy, He will have it owned, and in every circle of His dominions. Hence it says, after stating the fact that He has given Him the name which is above every name, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The language here employed must be carefully considered, if its precise significance is to be apprehended. And, first of all, the force of the words "at the name of Jesus" must be explained, inasmuch as much discussion has been raised upon this point. The phrase in the original might be accurately rendered, "in the name of Jesus" instead of "at" His name, as in our translation. The question then is, Can this rendering be accepted? If "at the name of Jesus" were an incorrect presentation of the original words, the other, whatever its attendant difficulties, would have to be adopted; but it is as exact as "in the name of Jesus"; and on this account we must be governed by other considerations. It is then submitted, that to bow before God in the name of Jesus, and to confess Him as Lord, is to appear there in virtue of what He is, in all the value of what He is through His death and resurrection (see, for example, John 14:13, 14), and consequently it would imply salvation for all the classes named. In other words, if "in the name of Jesus" were insisted upon, it would make this scripture teach universalism, and a universalism, as will be seen later on, which would include demons as well as men and angels.

Such a meaning would thus land us in direct contradiction to many other scriptures; and hence we are compelled to adopt the alternative rendering, "at the name of Jesus."

By this is meant, that it is God's will that every creature in the universe shall sooner or later acknowledge the supremacy and lordship of the exalted and glorified Jesus. If the heart go with the acknowledgment, and the confession of the mouth proceed from a real and living faith in Christ, it will be salvation for all who make it. (See Rom. 10:8-13.) All therefore who in this day of grace receive the gospel, God's testimony to the death and resurrection of Christ, and confess Christ as their Lord as well as Savior, will be everlastingly saved. But the point of the scripture is, that all outside of this blessed class, all unrepentant and unregenerate men, all the angels who have ever stood, or rather, who have been preserved, in their created perfection, all the angels who have fallen and have been "cast... down to hell, and delivered... into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment," and all demons and infernal beings, will own, or be compelled by power to own, the authority and lordship of the glorified Jesus. God will not suffer, according to the teaching of this scripture, a single sentient creature to be contumacious or outwardly rebellious toward His beloved Son. They may hate Him in their hearts, as many of them will; but whether they do or not, they will be made to bow the knee to the once humbled and now glorified Jesus; and their lips will have to confess that He, Jesus Christ, is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. And this is His due, as it is well expressed in the familiar lines-

"Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou

That every knee to Thee should bow."

It may be necessary, however, to explain this with a little more detail, as some may not have hitherto entered into the subject. Let us then examine the actual words of this scripture. It says, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." Things in heaven, as before said, will include all celestial existences - all the heavenly hosts - and things on earth will, as plainly, indicate men; so the only difficulty lies in the phrase "under the earth." The word itself (for it is actually but one word) points admittedly to that which is subterranean. Conceding this, it is yet contended by some that only the dead are intended. But even in classical usage, it went further and comprised evil spirits; and when it is recalled that, during the sojourn of our blessed Lord in this world, demons were compelled to own His authority and even to confess His name, and that, as James teaches, they "believe, and tremble," there is a strong assurance that they are in view in this scripture. There is another scripture which, though apparently of the same significance, is yet quite different. In Revelation 5 we read, "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." The term "under the earth" here is not the same as in Philippians; and it means-as the addition of the words, "and such as are in the sea," etc., shows-every animate thing under the surface of the earth. It thus looks onward to the fulfillment of the last verse of Psalm 150, "Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD," and anticipates the praise of the whole creation.

Assuming then the correctness of our interpretation, it may now be asked, When will this universal acknowledgment of the authority of Christ, together with the confession of His lordship, take place? It is God acting from His own heart, let it be remembered, and also in righteousness, who has given to Christ this exalted place as Man. It is not a question here of His deity, although this is never to be forgotten, but rather of the place which God has accorded to Him as the Man who once humbled Himself here, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And together with His exaltation in this character, the decree has been issued that all created intelligences must bow to and own His sovereignty. Where then, the question returns, will obedience to this decree be exhibited? In seeking to answer it, we may take the three circles of beings in their order; and, first, therefore, that of things in heaven. There are two scriptures especially touching this subject to which reference may be made. In Hebrews 1, in a citation from the Psalms, we read, "Let all the angels of God worship Him"; and this is in connection with the introduction of the first-begotten into the world. In Revelation 5 we are permitted to hear ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, of angels, when the Lamb takes the book out of the right hand of Him that sits upon the throne, "Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." When, moreover, the Son of man comes in His glory, all the holy angels are with Him, as the executors of His throne; and we thus learn that their acknowledgment of His supremacy will be constant and perpetual-that, commencing with the moment of His exaltation, it will go on forever.

The submission of the second circle, that of things on earth, will in one sense be more gradual and extended. It began on the day of Pentecost; for Peter's testimony on that day was, that God had made that same Jesus whom the Jews had crucified, both Lord and Christ; and everyone who

through grace received this testimony, did in effect bow the knee to Christ, and confess His authority as declared by the apostles. So with everyone converted since that day, and so will it be with all who are brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light, on until the close of the day of grace. After the Church has been removed, there will be still proceeding a mighty work of grace, as may be gathered from Revelation 7; and during the thousand years will be fulfilled the glorious prediction of the Psalm: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him." There will therefore be, during His glorious kingdom on earth, universal subjection to His rightful claims as supreme; so that, as we read in another Psalm, "Through the greatness of Thy power"-power displayed before the eyes of men-"shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee," or, as it is in the margin, "yield feigned obedience." During this reign of righteousness, man will not dare, whatever the thoughts of his heart, to rebel against the sovereign rule of Christ, except at the cost of instant destruction. Outwardly, therefore, all will be in professed submission to His government. And is it not a delight to contemplate this prospect, when the once humbled and rejected Christ will be universally exalted, even upon this earth? The scene that once witnessed His shame and ignominy, will then behold His exaltation and glory; and from millions of hearts will go up the glad confession that it is His rightful due, as they sing, "Blessed be His glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen."

In regard to the last circle we have fewer positive scriptures to guide us, although the fact is stated over and over again that nothing, no being in the universe, will be excepted from subjugation to His authority. (See, for example, Eph. 1:20-22; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; etc.) The time when "the angels which kept not their first estate" will be dealt with, is distinctly stated to be at "the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). And we learn from Revelation 20 that the devil himself will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, immediately before the session of Christ-to whom all judgment has been committed-upon the great white throne, where all the dead, small and great, will receive their everlasting reward. Demons are not here mentioned, but there can be no doubt that they are included in the judgment of their leader and chief. The final judgment, therefore, whether of the fallen angels, of Satan himself, or of the multitudes of the unconverted dead (for only such appear before the great white throne) will take place at the close of all God's dealings with this world. Before this last session of judgment commences, the earth and the heaven will have fled away from the face of Him who will sit upon the great white throne; for this final scene of the establishment of God's holy claims and righteous authority, is preparatory to the introduction of the new heaven and the new earth, wherein righteousness will reign. God's purposes concerning the glory of His beloved Son, His will that every knee should bow to Him, and that every tongue should confess that He is Lord, will then have been accomplished. All evil will have been done away; for God will then have wiped away all tears from the eyes of all His redeemed, "and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Even the exaltation and glory of Christ has, if we may venture so to speak, an object. It is, as we read, "to the glory of God the Father." If His eternal counsels concerning Christ and His redeemed have flowed forth from His own heart, they will in their accomplishment and issue redound to His

own displayed glory before the eyes of the whole universe. It is for the believer to anticipate this: and, indeed, the contemplation of this glorious end of all God's ways will so fill his heart with admiration and adoration that he will be constrained to exclaim in the inspired words of the Apostle, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." And yet again, "Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

The Name Above Every Name: Part 7 - in His Name

On examination it will be found that there is, speaking generally, a twofold significance connected with this expression-one Godward and one manward. To this may be added the expression which, while slightly different, may be fitly included under this head; namely, believing "in His name." (John 1:12; 2:23.) The word "in" in this case is not the one usually so translated, but rather, "into" or "unto," and conjoined here with the believing, it indicates the object to which faith has been drawn. This will be more easily understood if it is explained that there are in Scripture three main ways of setting forth faith. For example, it is said that Abraham believed God; we also read constantly, especially in John's gospel (though the words are not always so rendered), of believing in Christ; and, in addition, we meet with believing on, or upon, Him, as in Acts 16:31, etc. There is a very distinct difference in these various modes of expression. To believe a person is to receive his word or testimony; to believe in him is to believe that he is trustworthy; and to believe on is really to rest upon, or to trust in, the object of faith which has been presented to the soul. We may see, therefore, that to believe in the name of Christ is the assent of the soul to His trustworthiness, and that the name of Christ, the expression of all that He is, is that which is proclaimed in the gospel as the object for faith. And the reception of this testimony, testimony to what Christ is, as the Lord Jesus Christ, is the commencement of all blessing. The title to take the place of children is connected with it (John 1:12), as also the title to the possession of eternal life.

(John 3:15, 16.) Attention is called to this, and it is earnestly pressed upon the reader, because, without the knowledge of this doorway into all blessedness, it is impossible to enter upon the consideration of the virtue of the name of Christ. The value of His name must be known for salvation before it can be enjoyed in the presence of God, or before it can be used in the world.

In John 14 we read, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." As the last words of verse 13 show, it is here, in accordance with the characteristic truth of this gospel, the name of the Son rather than that of Christ; but this will all the more strikingly illustrate our point. What then is brought before us is, that believers are divinely warranted to appear before the Father in the name of the Son; that they themselves- in relationship through having been born again and having received the Spirit of adoption through the death and resurrection of Christ, in association with Himself in His own relationship (chap. 20:17)-are now free to enter into the presence of His Father, and their Father, in His blessed name. That these words look on to the period after His death, resurrection, and ascension is evident from the fact that the presence of the Holy Spirit is contemplated. (Chap. 14:16, 17, etc.) When that time should have come, not before, they might ask the Father in His name. This will explain the Lord's language in chapter 16: "And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto" (during the time of His sojourn with them on earth) "have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." vv. 23, 24. Who of us has entered into the vast significance of this scripture? Or who has availed himself in all its length, breadth, height, and depth of the unspeakable grace herein expressed?

Let us then examine these wondrous intimations; and to aid us we may inquire, first of all, what is meant by asking in the Son's name. To be before the Father thus, is to be there in all the value of that name, according to the Father's own estimate of it, with all the claim of the Son upon the Father's heart, and with the Son's authority for the presentation of our petitions. When He Himself, the incarnate Son, stood by the grave of Lazarus, He said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always." If therefore we ask anything in His name, we shall also be always heard; and this is precisely what the blessed Lord here promises. Understanding then that He has given us this liberty and privilege, when we are in the enjoyment of the relationship which He has secured for us with the Father, two things have yet to be ascertained; first, as to His requisite authority for the petitions here referred to; second, as to their subject. The authority of the Son for the utterance of any special desires begotten in our hearts can only be obtained in communion with His own mind, as we are taught from the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit. And hence their subject can only concern the Son's own things. That is, in other words, the assurance given that whatsoever we ask in His name shall be done, cannot allude to our own personal needs and desires; but it supposes His people to be in fellowship with His own desires, objects, and interests, so that they can pray for these in His own name, and with His authority. For when we have learned in any feeble measure what the Father's counsels are for the glory of His beloved Son, we are free, if we have ceased from self-occupation, to be led out into the vast circle of the Son's things and the Father's things (John 16:14, 15), and to pray for the accomplishment of all these wondrous purposes of His love. What a place it is into which we are introduced! And what grace to invest us with all His own preciousness before the Father!

If on this side we may appear before God in the name of Christ, on the other, it is enjoined upon us to do everything, whether among our fellow believers or in the world, in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him (Col. 3:17). These two aspects are constantly, and in every variety of manner, presented in the Scriptures. In John 17, for example, after the Lord has put the disciples in His own place before the Father, He gives them His own place before the world. Peter, in like manner, teaches that if believers are a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, they are also a royal priesthood to show out in the world the praises (excellencies) of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. This is only to state the blessed truth that the believer is inseparable from Christ, whether before God or before men, that through grace he is so bound up with all that He is and has accomplished, that he enters the holiest in all the value of His Person and His work, and passes through the world as His representative. Indeed, this last word most nearly expresses what it is to act in the name of Christ, or, as in this scripture, in the name of the Lord Jesus. It is to act on His behalf and under His authority. What an ambassador, or a plenipotentiary, is in relation to his sovereign, the Christian is in relation to Christ. He is to be governed entirely by the will of his Lord; he must with all fidelity express His mind, study His instructions, and seek in every way to advance His interests. Self and selfish objects can have no place in such a mission; his motto must be that of the Apostle Paul, "To me to live is Christ"; Christ alone the motive and Object of all his activities.

We may well pause in the presence of such a statement, and exclaim, Who is sufficient for such a mission? Lest any, therefore, should be overwhelmed at the thought of what they might deem to be a tremendous responsibility, let it be remembered that He who sends us out to act in His name, sustains us in the mission with all His power. No one goes to warfare at his own charges at any

time. His name, indeed, when rightly borne and used, carries omnipotence with it. Thus when the seventy returned to the Lord, they said, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us" (not "through," as rendered, but) "in Thy name." "Behold," replied the Lord, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy." The mission and the power for its accomplishment are thus intimately connected; only faith, faith in activity, is the essential condition for the use of the power. This truth needs to be earnestly insisted upon at the present time, if there is to be a revival, or recovery, before the Lord's return. It is written, "All things are possible to him that believeth"; we read the words, do not doubt them, and yet we seldom think of the possibility of their being verified in our own experience. A saint of olden time knew the secret when he wrote, "Lord, give what Thou commandest, and then command what Thou wilt." Even so, for it is only by the Lord's own power that the smallest of His precepts can be translated into practice; while it is equally true that His largest behests are as easy of performance as the smallest, inasmuch as adequate power is ever at the service of faith. This is seen in the case of the man with the withered hand. How could he stretch forth an arm that was dry and dead? He believed, and divine power flowed into his dead arm; he stretched it forth, and lo! it "was restored whole as the other."

A few illustrations of acting in the name of Christ will help to the understanding of the whole subject. Take first an instance of apostolical activity in Pentecostal days. When Peter and John encountered the lame man at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, Peter expressly disclaimed acting in his own authority, or power, saying, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). In like manner Paul, "in the name of Jesus Christ," commanded the evil spirit which possessed the damsel who followed him day by day, to come out of her. In both cases they acted, therefore, as His servants, and used, in the exercise of faith, His power in the miracles wrought. So likewise, when correcting disorders among the saints at Corinth and at Thessalonica, the Apostle acted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 5:4; 2 Thess. 3:6.) These instances will suffice to show that in all service, as well as in all the duties and responsibilities of daily life, it is the privilege of the believer to act in the name of his Lord. It is, indeed, his true calling to stand before men as the representative of Christ. This may be seen in another aspect from a scripture in Peter. "If ye be reproached," he says, "for" (literally in) "the name of Christ, happy are ye" (1 Pet. 4:14). Here it is evident that the enemies of Christ look upon His people as bearing His name, and thus standing forth in the world as representing Him. Hence their enmity to Christ is manifested in the persecution of His followers. And the Christian can never divest himself of this relationship to his absent Lord. Whether in the assembly, in his home, or moving among his fellow men, everywhere and at all times, he must remember that he bears the name of Christ, to act in His interests, under His authority, and on His behalf.

It maybe again repeated, What an unutterable privilege to be endowed with the liberty of appearing before God and men in the name of Christ! It is, on the other hand, the very greatness of the privilege which indicates the vastness of the responsibility. For if we are entrusted with the name of Christ, as with a holy standard, what incessant vigilance, and what realization of our dependence, are required to maintain it in all its purity, and to guard it from all dishonor? To encourage ourselves to be diligent in this object, we may remind ourselves how precious it is to the heart of Christ to behold His people zealously and jealously caring for the honor of His name. As we read in the prophet Malachi, "They that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them

that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name." Chap. 3:16. It was a day of abounding iniquity and corruption among God's people; but this pious remnant were drawn apart from the evil into the bonds of holy fellowship by their godly fear, and their love of Jehovah's name. The eyes of the Lord were upon them, and in the joy of His heart He proclaimed, "And they shall be Mine... in that day when I make up My jewels"; that is, in the day of coming judgment He would put them into His treasury house among His precious things. May we all covet the Lord's approbation for caring for the honor of His most precious and peerless name.

The Name Above Every Name: Part 8 - for His Name's Sake

There are two or three expressions which may be considered under this head. A shade of difference may be discerned in their meaning; but, in their practical application, they have to all intents and purposes the same force. One might be rendered "on account," or "by reason of His name"; another, as the title of this chapter; and yet another, "on behalf of His name." In all three alike the fundamental idea is the value of the name to the one acting, enduring, or suffering; and this will also find, as we hope to see, an exemplification in God's actings of grace toward His people. The words, "Thy name is as ointment poured forth," have already been before us, and the expressions now to be adduced will furnish another illustration of the fact that it is the fragrance of the name of Christ which delights both the heart of God, and the hearts of His people. Hence it is, we read in connection with the blessings of His righteous sway during the thousand years, that "His name shall endure forever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed." Psalm 72:17. Yes, throughout eternity we shall continue to sing the song we have learned on earth:

"Thy name we love, Lord Jesus,

And lowly bow before Thee;

And while we live, to Thee we give

All blessing, worship, glory."

In the first case which will come before us, it is the value of the name to God as affording the basis for the exercise of His forgiving love. The Apostle John thus says, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." 1 John 2:12. The whole truth of grace is contained in this short statement, for the term "little children" in this scripture comprises the whole family of God. We learn from it, that in the forgiveness of sins God acts solely on the ground of the value of the name of His beloved Son, but in virtue of His name as the One who glorified Him on the earth and finished the work which He gave Him to do. What misconceptions would be cleared away from the minds of anxious souls if this simple truth were but apprehended! For then, instead of spending weary days in searching for some good thing or merit in themselves, on which to rest for acceptance before God, or as an undoubted evidence of their conversion, they would perceive that if they are to be saved, it must be wholly through what Christ is to God. Let all such, therefore, prayerfully ponder the words, "for His name's sake," inasmuch as they show beyond the possibility of doubt or mistake, that God's attitude toward all who come to Him confessing their sins, depends entirely upon His estimate of the value of the name of that blessed One who now sits at His right hand. What an unchanging and immovable rock is thus provided for our souls - that Rock of Ages, indeed, on which we may rest forever in perfect peace, a peace which no change of feeling or experience need ever affect. Let us then never cease to proclaim this blessed truth to sin-stricken and weary souls, for it is the very kernel of God's glad tidings to men in this day of grace.

And not only have we thus received the forgiveness of our sins, but our feet are also kept, while passing through the wilderness, in the same way. We read, for example, in Psalm 23: "He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." That is, God has undertaken everything for us on the same ground as that on which He has forgiven our sins. The motive for all His activities of grace and love, for His unchanging attitude, for His watchful care and protection, is found in Christ, and not in ourselves. This is blessedly exemplified in the Psalm whence the above citation is taken; only here, it is the Lord as our Shepherd, acting rather from His own heart, and from the relationship which He has been pleased to assume toward His people. The simple argument is, if He has become our Shepherd, He will provide everything necessary for us, whether in our pilgrim path, or as passing through the valley of the shadow of death. But the verse quoted shows that it is for His own name's sake that He maintains these relationships of grace. If we are weary, disheartened, discouraged, or depressed, He restores our souls; and, as needing constant guidance, with every desire to tread in His paths, but often unable to discern them, He has placed Himself at our head, and leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. If then the name of Christ is so unspeakably precious to God, and if it constitutes the all-efficacious basis of His dealings with us, how we should zealously seek to be in communion with Him about it, and thus, having some feeble sense of its value, delight to lose ourselves in it, resting in it in our approaches to God, even as He rests in it in His relationships with us.

Communion with the heart of God, indeed, as to the preciousness of the name of Christ, is the true secret of the unwearied devotedness and courage of many of His followers. The Apostle Paul may be mentioned as a special illustration of this, even though the words, "for His name's sake," be not used. In captivity, and no longer able to deliver his blessed message - in the prospect of death at any moment, for he knew not but that he might be thrown to the lions immediately - it was his solace, notwithstanding the mixed motives that governed the activity of many, that Christ was preached; and in this he both did and would rejoice. All his expectation and hope was that he might be so kept and sustained that Christ might be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. Absorbed in his object, Christ alone bounded his horizon; and hence for Christ's sake he was willing to suffer anything and everything, if he might but bring glory to His blessed name. In like manner, we read in another epistle of some who had the name of Christ so indelibly graven upon their hearts that, for His sake, they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods; of others who had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonments; and of others again who were sawn asunder, or slain with the sword, while if some escaped martyrdom, they had to wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented. (Heb. 10 and 11.)

This suffering character of the path of His disciples was often the theme of our Lord's instruction. So far from concealing from them the afflictions and persecutions which they would encounter, He warned them on every possible occasion of what they would have to endure for His name's sake. Thus, for example, He says in the sermon on the mount, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." At another time, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake"; and yet again, "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you"; "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." So it came to pass; for Paul wrote (citing from the Psalms), "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." But if our blessed Lord has forewarned us of

what may be entailed upon us through the confession of His name, He has also ministered the needed sustainment and consolation. Of Himself in His pathway through this world, it is written that for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame; and for our encouragement He has left on record these words, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

To suffer with Christ is a necessity, in some measure, if we are the children of God; but to suffer for Christ is a privilege attached to fidelity in His service. As an example of this, the case of Peter and John might be adduced. Brought up before the Jewish council they had been forbidden to speak or to teach in the name of Jesus; but, obeying God rather than men, they proceeded with their blessed work.

Once more arrested, after they had been miraculously delivered from prison, they were beaten, and commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus. Were they disheartened or daunted because of what they had to endure? So far from it, they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:40, 41.) What then is the secret of this superiority to shame and suffering? It is the preciousness of Christ to the hearts of His people, the assurance of His presence with them, and the knowledge that even death is but the path of life into His eternal presence. If He for our sakes became poor, that through His poverty we might be rich, it is surely no great thing if we are taught through grace to count, like Moses, the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, and if we are made willing to suffer persecution, and to endure the loss of all things here for His name's sake.

Yet another instance of the power of the name of Christ may be considered. In John's third epistle we read of some who "for His name's sake" went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. The form of the phrase, "for His name's sake," in this scripture exactly coincides with that used of Peter and John in Acts 5; and we thus gather that it was the value of the name of Christ to their hearts that led the latter to rejoice in suffering, and the former to refuse support from the world for his service. Well would it have been for the Church of God if the example of these devoted servants had been followed. Nothing has so corrupted Christianity as the acceptance of worldly help for the furtherance of its objects. Before the Lord was crucified He said to His disciples, "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing." Is He less tender in His care over His servants now that He is glorified at the right hand of God? A noble army of devoted servants in every part of the world will gladly testify that they too, though without assured support from man, and refusing assistance from the world, have lacked nothing. And it would be the commencement of a new era in Christian service, and especially in Christian missions, if those engaged in them were to go forth in the same simple faith in the all-sufficiency of the name of their Lord. In the closing days of the history of the Church on earth, may many true believers be raised up, and be sent forth into the harvest by the Lord of the harvest - men to whom the name of Christ shall be so precious that they may find in it their only motive, the only stimulus for their zeal, and their abundant warrant for their entire dependence upon Him for all their needed support.

The reader will find much edification in tracing out other cases in the Scriptures; and our prayer is that every one who may be encouraged to do so by the perusal of what has been written, may find,

while so engaged, that his heart is drawn out more fully in the adoration and praise of our blessed Lord and Savior, and that it may become his one all-absorbing desire, in all his future life, to bring glory to this precious NAME.

The Name Above Every Name: Part 9 - Unto His Name

If the term "name" as used of our blessed Lord and Savior, is expressive of all that He is, it will not cause surprise to find it presented to us in so many different ways and aspects. The necessary connection, indeed, between the living Word and the written Word, inasmuch as the latter contains the revelation of the former, affords the explanation. It follows that the more we have Christ Himself before us, in reading the Scriptures, the more fully are we in the mind of the Holy Spirit, and the better are we prepared for the discernment of the rays of His glory, which shine forth from every page. To regard the Scriptures as the display of Christ, of God revealed in Christ, is a sure preservative from error, as well as the antidote to the rationalistic teachings of the day; while, at the same time, it tends to produce that reverence and adoration in the soul, without which it is impossible to receive the divine communications therein made. Too much stress cannot be laid on this point, and the remark is earnestly commended to the attention of the reader.

In passing now to consider the phrase, "unto His name," we propose to select two or three examples of its use to illustrate its significance, and to point out how in every case it brings into prominence, whether as Leader, Object, or Center, the Person of our blessed Lord. We take first of all the expression, "Baptized in [unto] the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16; 19:5). In both instances, in our translation, it is rendered, "in the name of the Lord Jesus"; but the words could only be accurately translated, we apprehend, as "unto the name," etc. This, indeed, can be shown from renderings of the same word in other places. Thus in Acts 19:3, where the Apostle says, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" and they say, "Unto John's baptism," the same word is used. Similarly, in 1 Cor. 10:2, that they "were all baptized unto Moses," the same word is also employed. It is, therefore, abundantly clear that "unto" should be substituted for "in" in the two scriptures cited; and it is necessary that this should be done, from the fact that "in the name of the Lord" is also found in connection with baptism (Acts 10:48). The meaning in this case, as explained in a former chapter, will be that those who baptized Cornelius and those who heard the word with him, acted, by the direction of Peter, on behalf, and under the authority, of the Lord.

Having now elucidated the force of the term, its meaning may engage our attention. The similar expression in 1 Corinthians 10 may help us to ascertain it. There can be little question that to be baptized unto Moses, implies the bringing of the people into association with Moses as under his authority. In like manner, to be baptized unto the name of the Lord Jesus, brought those who were baptized on to the ground where His authority was supreme, and into the company of those who owned that authority. The name of the Lord will then express, in this connection, what Christ is as exalted and glorified as Lord; and the baptized confess Him as such, and own also His claims upon, and His authority over, them. It is not the whole truth of baptism, for Paul teaches that as many as were baptized unto Christ Jesus, were baptized unto His death. But we do not enter upon this here, as we desire to confine ourselves to the scripture before us, and to call attention to its meaning. To go no further then, its import is the absolute authority of Christ as Lord, and the responsibility of the confession of it on the part of those who have been baptized. In a day of profession and declension, it is well to inquire whether souls who have been led an to the ground

of Christianity are aware of the responsibilities which they have assumed. Surely the Lord might also say to many of us in this day, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" For there never was a time when the spirit of lawlessness was more prevalent, even in combination with the confession of the name and authority of Christ. If the first duty of a soldier is unquestioning obedience, surely a Christian should ever be marked out before the world by his unqualified subjection to the authority of his Lord as expressed in His Word, and by his unwearied zeal and devotedness in maintaining the honor of His blessed name. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power."

Another example of the use of the same phrase may be cited from the epistle to the Hebrews. There we read, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward [or "unto"] His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Chap. 6:10. In many respects this is a most remarkable passage for the preciousness of the truths it contains. It will be observed that here it is the name of God; for Christ, in this epistle, is seen as the High Priest at the right hand of God, where He both represents and intercedes for His people. Still, it is the name of God as revealed in Christ; for in chapter 1 we are reminded that the Son is addressed as God. This being so, we have to inquire as to the meaning of the words-unto His name-in this passage. First of all, it is plain that the Apostle alludes to ministry to the saints. These Hebrew believers had been doing good, and "communicating," that is, sharing what they possessed with their fellow saints who were in need; for they had apprehended the truth that with such sacrifices God was well pleased. (See chap. 13:16.) In thus caring with true brotherly love for the needs of the saints of God, they were, the Apostle says, showing kindness unto His name.

But this requires further explanation. It must then be remembered that our blessed Lord fully identifies Himself with His people, and that His name is called upon them, as well as entrusted to them to bear, and to maintain His honor, before men. Hence it is that to receive a Christian in the name of Christ, is to receive Christ Himself; and, further, to receive Christ is to receive Him that sent Him. God is thus identified with Christ (not now to speak of their essential unity), and Christ makes Himself one with His people. Turning then to the other side, it will be at once understood that whatever is ministered to His own, is kindness shown to His name. He Himself has explained it in the ever memorable words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." So too, in a still deeper sense, He could say to one who had been the bitter and relentless enemy of His people, "Why persecutest thou Me?" How blessed an encouragement to remember at all times that the Lord regards what is done to His saints as done to Himself! And herein lies also the secret of all true service among His people. If they are our object, much as they might benefit by the service, it is not such service as the Lord can commend. In such a case there might be brotherly love, or at least the semblance of it, in exercise; but that which should be the divine spring of it, Christ Himself, would be wanting. To be imbued with this truth, would produce unwearied and incessant devotedness.

As another instance, we may refer to Matthew 18. We give the whole passage: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name (the words here are also more correctly translated, "unto" My name), there am I in the midst of them." vv. 19, 20. To understand the blessed instruction of this scripture, it should be borne in mind that the chapter "supposes Christ rejected and absent, and the glory of chapter 17 not yet

come. It passes over chapter 17 to connect itself with chapter 16"; and the reason of this is that it deals with the two subjects introduced in chapter 16, the Church and the kingdom, which should occupy the place of Christ on earth during the period of His absence and session at the right hand of God, where He will remain until His enemies are made His footstool (Psalm 110). It may also be pointed out that, in connection with the mention of the assembly in this chapter, provision is made for three things: first, the question of trespass against a brother; second, the administration of discipline, binding and loosing, with its divine ratification when done according to God; and last, what more immediately concerns us in this chapter, the condition of prevailing prayers.

It will be noticed by the reader that verse 19 commences an additional instruction, as shown by the words, "Again I say unto you," etc., though we cannot doubt that the company, the "two of you," or the "two or three," is connected with the assembly in verse 17. What is added, is the teaching concerning agreement in prayer, rather than anything which regards the Church, except, indeed, the revelation of the wondrous grace which associates the Lord's presence and union in prayer with any two or three who may be gathered unto His name. So understanding it, everything depends, as will be perceived, upon what is meant by being thus gathered. Speaking generally, it may be said that the essential point is, that as "name" expresses the truth of the Person, the Lord Himself must be the Center and the Object of the gathering. But then it must also be remembered that His full name in this relationship is the Lord Jesus Christ. His name, as such, speaks therefore of His authority, His Person, and His work. The gathering then must be under, and as subject to, His authority, and also to maintain the truths of His Person and work. That the gathering power is the Holy Spirit, is evident from the fact that He is here to glorify Christ; and being so, He could not sanction any assembly where the supremacy of Christ was not owned, or where there might be any indifference to the glories of His Person, or to the character of the atonement made upon the cross. Every company, therefore, claiming to be gathered unto His name must answer to these tests.

This is the condition which the Lord Himself lays down for His own presence - "Where two or three are gathered together in [unto] My name, there am I in the midst of them." It is not even, there will I be, but there am I; and we then learn that the gathering together thus - unto His name - ensures His presence. The realization of it may depend upon our state of soul, as it must do; but the Lord's presence is a fact connected with the fulfillment of a condition. What grace! And what a fount of blessing and power in the midst of His own! An example of this, indeed, is given; for He tells us that He Himself, present in the midst of His saints gathered after this manner, is the power to produce agreement in prayer, and the assurance that every such prayer shall be answered by the Father. What room for heart searching as to the character of our gatherings, is thus afforded! And what a call it gives to us to examine our own individual state of soul, even if we are truly gathered unto His name! One of Satan's snares is to lead us to take things for granted; the means of avoiding it is to be constantly before God, desiring to have everything as to ourselves and our associations, exposed by the light of His presence, and to have everything tested by His unerring Word.

Nothing Too Hard

Ah Lord GOD! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee." Jer. 32:17.

These great words were sighed out by Jeremiah's troubled soul in prayer to Jehovah. It is necessary to read the whole of the chapter from which they are taken, properly to enter into the prophet's prayer and the Lord's answer to it; but the single verse before us contains in itself deep encouragement for the tried and troubled heart.

Dark as present circumstances may be, it is well for the believer, as did Jeremiah, to lay firm hold on God Himself. All was utter gloom to the natural eye, and the promises of God apparently impossible to be fulfilled when Jeremiah uttered the words before us. But he believed God. And God showed His servant who believed His word, His WAYS.

First, we have to trust God's Word; and if there be implicit trust in Him, His ways will be made manifest to us.

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

Obedience and Dependence

In a recent issue we called the attention of our readers to the weighty fact, that our God has in His infinite mercy provided for His people, in this dark and evil world, both authority and power - the authority and power of His Spirit - for the path which they are called to tread, and the work they are called to do. We have ample guidance in the Word, and we have the power of God to count upon for all the difficulties and demands of the scene through which we have to pass home to our eternal rest above. We have authority and power for all.

But we must remember, that if God has furnished us with authority, we must be obedient. And if He has provided the power, we must be dependent. Of what use is the authority if we do not obey it? I may give my servant the plainest and fullest directions as to where he is to go, and what he is to do, and what he is to say; but if, instead of acting simply upon my directions, he begins to reason, and think, and draw conclusions, to use his own judgment, and act according to his own will, of what use are my directions? None whatever, except it be to show how entirely he has departed from them. Clearly, the business of a servant is to obey, not to reason - to act according to his master's directions, not according to his own will or judgment. If he only does exactly what his master tells him, he is not responsible for the consequences.

The one grand business of a servant is to obey. This is the moral perfection of a servant. Alas! how rare! There has been but one absolutely obedient and perfectly dependent servant in the entire history of this world - the Man Christ Jesus. His meat and His drink were to obey. He found His joy in obedience. "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; Mine ears hast Thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:6-8.

Our blessed Lord Jesus found in the will of God His only motive for action. There was nothing in Him that needed to be restrained by the authority of God. His will was perfect, and His every movement was of necessity - the very necessity of His perfect nature - in the current of the divine will. "Thy law is within My heart"; "I delight to do Thy will"; "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."

Now what could Satan do with such a man as this? Absolutely nothing. He tried to withdraw Him from the path of obedience and the place of dependence, but in vain. "If Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." Surely God would give His Son bread. No doubt; but the perfect Man refuses to make bread for Himself. He had no command, no authority, and therefore no motive for action. "It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." So throughout the entire temptation. Nothing could withdraw the blessed One from the path of simple obedience. "It is written" was His one unvarying answer. He would not, could not, act without a motive; and His only motive was found in the will of God. "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart."

Such was the obedience of Jesus Christ - an obedience perfect from first to last. And not only was He perfectly obedient, but perfectly dependent. Though God over all, blessed forever, yet, having His place as a man in this world, He lived a life of perfect dependence on God. He could say, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Isa. 50:3-7. And again, "Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee do I put My trust." Psalm 16:1. And again, "I was cast upon Thee from the womb" (Psalm 22:10). He was wholly and continually cast upon God, from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary; and when He had finished all, He surrendered His spirit into the Father's hand, and His flesh rested in hope. His obedience and dependence were divinely perfect throughout.

But we must now ask the reader to turn with us for a few moments to two examples of the very opposite of all this -two cases in which, through lack of obedience and dependence, the most disastrous results followed.

Let us in the first place turn to the 13th chapter of 1 Kings. Doubtless the case is familiar to us; but let us look at it in connection with our present theme.

"And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Be-thel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD." Thus far all was right. He spoke by the word of God, and the power of God accompanied the testimony; and the spirit of the king was humbled and subdued for the moment.

But more than this. The man of God was enabled to refuse the king's invitation to come home with him and refresh himself and receive a reward. "And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place. For so it was charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou earnest."

All this was lovely - perfectly delightful to dwell upon. The feet of the man of God stand firm in the bright and blessed path of obedience, and all is victory. The offers of the king are flung aside without a moment's hesitation. Half the royal house cannot tempt him off the narrow, holy, happy path of obedience. He rejects every overture, and turns to pursue the straight path opened before him by the word of the Lord. There is no reasoning, no questioning, no hesitation. The word of the Lord settles everything. He has but to obey, regardless of consequences. And so far he does, and all is well.

But mark the sequel. "Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el" - reader, beware of old prophets! And this old prophet followed the man of God, and said to him, "Come home with me, and eat bread." This was the devil in a new shape. What the word of a king had failed to do, the word of a prophet might accomplish. It was a wile of Satan, for which the man of God was evidently unprepared. The garb of a prophet deceived him, and threw him completely off his guard; we can

at once perceive his altered tone. When replying to the king, he speaks with vividness, force, and bold decision - "If thou wilt give me half of thine house, I will not go in with thee." And then he adds, with equal force, his reason for refusing: "For so it was charged me by the word of the LORD."

But, in his reply to the prophet, there is manifest decline in the way of energy, boldness, and decision. He says, "I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee." And in assigning the reason, instead of the forcible word "charged," we have the feeble word, "It was said to me."

In short, the whole tone is lower. The word of God was losing its true place and power in his soul. No change had passed over that word. "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven." And had that word been hidden in the heart of the man of God, had it been dwelling richly in his soul, his answer to the prophet would have been as distinct and decided as his answer to the king. "By the word of Thy lips, I have kept Me from the paths of the destroyer." The spirit of obedience is the great moral safeguard against every scheme and every snare of the enemy. The enemy may shift his ground; he may change his tactics and vary his agency; but obedience to the plain and simple Word of God preserves the soul from all his wicked schemes and crafty devices. The devil can do nothing with a man who is absolutely ruled by the Word of God, and refuses to move the breadth of a hair without divine authority.

But note how the enemy urges his point with the man of God. "I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house."

Now, what should the man of God have said to this? If the word of his Lord had been abiding in him, he would at once have said, "If ten thousand prophets and ten thousand angels were to say, Bring him back, I should regard them all as liars and emissaries of the devil, sent forth to allure me from the holy, happy path of obedience." This would have been a sublime reply. It would have the same heavenly ring about it as is exhibited in these glowing words of the Apostle: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed [anathema]."

But alas! alas! the man of God stepped off the path of obedience; and the very man whom Satan had used to draw him off, became the mouthpiece of Jehovah to announce in his ears the terrible consequence. He lied when Satan used him. The erring man of God was slain by a lion, because he disobeyed the word of the Lord. Yes; he stepped off the narrow path of obedience into the wide field of his own will, and there he was slain.

Reader, let us beware of old prophets, and angels of light! Let us, in the true spirit of obedience, keep close, very close, to the Word of our God. We shall find the path of obedience both safe and pleasant, holy and happy.

And now for a moment, ere we close, let us glance at the 9th chapter of Joshua, which records for our admonition the manner in which even Joshua himself was ensnared through lack of simple dependence upon God. We do not quote the passage, or enter into any detail. The reader can turn to the chapter and ponder its contents.

Why was Israel beguiled by the craft of the Gibeonites? Because they leaned to their own understanding, and judged by the sight of their eyes, instead of waiting upon God for guidance and

counsel. He knew all about the Gibeonites. He was not deceived by their tattered rags and moldy bread; and neither would they, had they only looked to Him.

But here they failed. They did not wait on God. He would have guided them. He would have told them who these crafty strangers were. He would have made all clear for them, had they simply waited on Him in the sense of their own ignorance and feebleness. But no; they would think for themselves, and judge for themselves, and reason from what they saw, and draw their own conclusions. All these things they would do; and hence the tattered garments of the Gibeonites accomplished what the frowning bulwarks of Jericho had failed to do.

Now, we may be quite sure that Israel had no thought of making a league with any of the Canaanites. No, they were in terrible indignation when they discovered that they had done so. But they did it, and had to abide by it. It is easier to make a mistake than to rectify it, and so the Gibeonites remained as a striking memorial of the evil of not waiting on God for counsel and guidance.

May the Holy Spirit teach us, from all that has passed before us, the solemn importance of obedience and dependence.

The Object of Service

Let Christ be in deed, and not in name only, your "Lord and Master." Wait upon Him, therefore, habitually, to know what He would have you do. Seek not to be honored of men. Take the lowly place. Let your heart be earnestly set on the conversion of sinners; but beware how you speak of your own labors, or even of the blessings which the Lord may vouchsafe to others through you. Never utter a word tending to gratify or exalt self. Be content to be overlooked, or to have others preferred before you. Let every trial serve to cast you more upon the Lord for comfort, guidance, and strength. Have one object before you; let it be the polestar of your whole life - that Christ may be glorified in you, and by you - and in a day to come He will not fail to acknowledge your service, and to bestow upon you His promised great reward.

Circumstances on Earth and Heaven

November 13, 1928

It is before me at this time to speak of the Lord Jesus in some of His circumstances on earth, and some of His circumstances in heaven. The first are past, and those we are about to speak of are future.

We will go back for a moment to the gospels, to that night in which the Lord was betrayed, and will follow Him in our thoughts as led by the Spirit of God, into Gethsemane; and we shall follow Him out of Gethsemane, and still follow Him - the bound, led, captive prisoner - into the palace of the high priest, and will watch Him there. See the reception and treatment He receives at the palace - shame, scorn, and spitting. We will follow Him from the palace of the high priest to the judgment hall of Pilate, and again we will watch and see what the Blessed One receives there-sorrow, grief, and shame. Follow Him from Pilate's hall to Herod's hall - the same thing. Follow Him from Herod's hall back to Pilate's hall, and it is the same thing. It is good for us to follow Him thus in our thoughts from place to place. Now follow Him from the judgment hall of Pilate to the "place called Calvary." And what about the place called Calvary? "There they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left" (Luke 23:33). Such was the last of the Lord's circumstances in this world. Such was the answer He received for a life of untiring love and service.

Notice, after He leaves the judgment hall, and before He reaches Calvary, the striking instance of divine love in its care for others. A number of women follow and bewail Him, and well they might. He has forgotten His own circumstances for the moment, and turns to them saying, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." What a touching instance of the Savior's love, looking not on what was before Him, but what was before them, because of their rejection of Him. "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" v. 31. The time had not yet come when Jerusalem would receive governmental retribution for the death of God's Son. "When the morning was come" (Matt. 27:1) - O fellow Christian, think of the night that had preceded that morning! Gather up the circumstances of the blessed Savior during His last days on earth. Think of what that life of His had been toward God and man - service, service, service to man - devotedness, devotedness, devotedness to God. It ended at Calvary, the place of the skull. Such is the answer this poor world has given to God sending His Son in infinite love into it. Can we wonder that the end of the world has come?

Luke 20. The parable of the vineyard let forth to husbandmen pictures God saying, "What shall I do" (v. 13)? I have sent My messengers. All they have received is shame, persecution, death, casting out. It is a wonderful thing, the Lord Jesus picturing God doing that, saying, "What shall I do?" There is but one resource - "I will send My Beloved." Did they reverence Him? What does Calvary tell? Did they give Him a crown? - a crown of thorns! Here is God's last resource. He did not have another. Now what shall that blessed God do? There was but one thing, and that which He had no pleasure in - draw the sword. Upon whom did the stroke fall? "Awake, O sword, against

My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 13:7). God drew the sword and the stroke of judgment fell on His Son; and it is on that basis that mercy is offered now to man. It is well for old and young to remember that there is a suspended sentence over this world, and that suspended sentence is a sentence of judgment; and that is the next thing for God in His ways with this world.

We shall now speak of the blessed Lord in far different circumstances, as we find Him in the 4th and 5th chapters of Revelation. Chapter 4:1, "After this" - after what? Dear friends, there is a wonderful event to happen on earth, and a wonderful event to take place in heaven, that will change things on earth and things in heaven.

After what? After an event like this has taken place. A shout is heard, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God has removed all His redeemed from the earth; what has become of them? The shout has changed them all. What an event! And that is the very next thing that clears the way for judgment to fall on the earth. After this, after the Church's history is closed, there is a change in God's attitude toward the world. He sits on a different throne. Now, His throne is a throne of grace; but in Revelation 4, it is a throne of judgment. His attitude toward the world is not longer as a Savior God, the character in which He rejoices. Out of that throne in Revelation 4 proceeded "lightnings and thunderings and voices." When will this change take place? It will be according to the length of time of God's longsuffering and the prolongings of His patient grace toward this world.

When the redeemed are gathered home, heaven has a company which it has never had before - a vast company - and they are known as the redeemed. Well, there is that One sitting upon the throne - the throne in the rainbow. Why the rainbow? He is a faithful judge and remembers His covenant with the earth, when He set the rainbow in the cloud as a sign of mercy. Why is it seen before the throne, and what is the color of the rainbow? Green, "like unto an emerald." The freshness of His covenant with the earth is before Him, and all that redemption is founded on - sacrifice. And the bow in the cloud tells us about God having "smelled a sweet savor." (Gen. 8:21.) This is very instructive. What is the result of Abel's sacrifice? Personal acceptance. What is Noah's? Blessing for creation as such; these two things give us the double aspect and bearing of the sacrifice of Christ.

This Sitter upon the throne from which proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices, is sitting there in silent majesty, while those that wait upon Him cry, "Holy, holy, holy." In Revelation 4 we have God in an atmosphere in which He is not at home. He has no pleasure in judgment. He delights to save, but His nature and His character force Him there.

How reluctantly He draws the sword; but when He draws it, He draws it. If there is an unsaved one in this room tonight, O take this warning. He has a book in His right hand, full, written within and without.

Chapter 5:2. "A strong angel, proclaiming with a loud voice" through the universe. What does He say? "Who is worthy?" And the answer to the challenge was silence. This brings the Lord Jesus more definitely before us as the worthy One. "And I wept much, because no man was found worthy." What a strange sight, but what an instructive one, especially if our hearts are warm to Christ. The new nature, the new heart (an expression I do not often use) finds its joy in Christ, and

in Christ exalted.

Verse 5 speaks of the "Lion of the tribe of Juda." In what circumstances have we seen the One here called the "Lion of the tribe of Juda"? Not in claiming or asserting His rights. In those circumstances, instead of being as the "Lion of the tribe of Juda," He is seen as a Lamb dumb before its shearers. Picture the Lord Jesus, His hands bound, receiving insult after insult, and answering when asked if He were the Christ the Son of God, "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Matt. 26:64. "Nevertheless," in spite of all My circumstances, here I am your captive, as it seems at your mercy, but "hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power."

The world would have Him stay there "on the right hand of power," but there is a limit to His sitting there. He is coming, coming as the Son of man. That is what the world fears. It will be an awful day for it when the heavens are opened and the Son of man is revealed.

Here we have "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" as "a Lamb as it had been slain" - not the Lamb in His atoning character, but the Lamb as a sufferer at the hand of this world, the Lord "reckoned with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12; J.N.D. Trans.). When His praise is celebrated it is as the One who has accomplished redemption; but in verse 6 it is the Lamb character - the Man of sorrows and of shame and woe, in heaven.

The sufferings of the cross are divided and distinct in their character and result. They are divided into two three-hour periods. During the first three hours, God is allowing man to display what is in his heart toward Him; and that class of sufferings the Lord felt intensely, but the sword was not drawn yet. There is no atonement in the sufferings of the Lord Jesus in the first three hours on the cross, but the manifestation of man's enmity; and had the stroke fallen then for these guilty ones, which it could have done in righteousness, it would have been their everlasting ruin. In these second three hours the Lord has to do with God. All is changed now. The sword is drawn on that blessed One. "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me." Who can measure the cross? It is only when we can enter at all into God's thoughts of it; only there can we learn it. There is only one place where we can learn God's thoughts of it, and His love to sinners. Where? At the Cross.

Two natures are manifested there. The nature of man toward God, and the nature and attitude of God toward man. The Lord condemned sin in the flesh, and found Himself not only suffering at the hands of man, but under the heavy weight of God's judgment against sin. At the cross alone is the measure of God's love seen.

Such were the circumstances of the blessed Lord on earth. It will be a wonderful thing to get to heaven and look upon Him, not only as the "Lion of the tribe of Juda," but as the Lamb of God, the One who bore the judgment of God. What can ever begin to equal the cross of Christ? The point this evening is not the cross, but the bearing of the cross. It is good for the soul to think of the Lord bound before His persecutors. We see there the heart of the Savior, and one looks forward to the time when we shall see Him exalted.

Rev. 5:7. From those solemn hands He takes that book, not in personal right, but He takes it as one who has acquired the right to take it. We are apt to overlook the acquired rights and glories of the Lord. In 1 Pet. 1:11 we should read, "the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should

follow." The word "glory" should be in the plural.

He had prevailed to open the book. From end to end of the creation His worth is celebrated. But first, before we go on, let us notice the Lamb of God has "seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God." Contrast this with the Lord in the judgment hall of which we have spoken. The seven horns speak of the completeness of power; the seven eyes speak of completeness of discernment; and the seven Spirits speak of the Holy Spirit in the completeness of His power and Person. When this power and this discernment are used, it is done in all the completeness of the power of the Holy Spirit. As here on earth, so there in heaven, when the reins of government are in His hands, all will be done in the completeness of the power of the Spirit.

What a contrast between heaven and earth! See the place the earth has given Him! Measure all by Christ. God's controversy with the world is the place it gave Christ.

There is no such scene in existence now as we have in our chapter. The great change has to take place when the vast company of the redeemed are gathered to the Lord. It is a future scene, and our eyes will behold it. How one anticipates it! What will it be to be one of that innumerable throng! And not a heart will be there that is cold or indifferent toward Him, and not a tongue will be silent in His praise. The saints are there to give. Happy saints! Happy Savior!

The change on earth and the change in heaven is at hand - verses 8 and 9. Faith and love are challenged; and faith and love can say, What other one could be found? What a wonderful thing to look forward to when the vast, vast throng of the redeemed will fall down before Him.

Those who are Christ's have no more place in this world than He had in the day they crucified Him. Preach condemnation coming to this world, and see what you will get.

Verse 8. They fell down before the Lamb. One's ear anticipates the joy of that. O redeemed one, you and I will be there. The "four and twenty elders" are in relation to Christ as their Redeemer, and each one of the innumerable throng is one of the kingdom of priests to God. How great will His joy be when He sees in that day the fruit of the travail of His soul. We shall see that joy.

They fall down before Him, "having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints." There are no more prayers needed for themselves, but there are others who need their prayers. "They sung a new song,... Thou art worthy." Now we get the atonement. He is first introduced to us as the silent sufferer; but when we bow before Him, it will be as the One who redeemed us to God "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Verse 10. "And we shall reign over the earth" (J.N.D. Trans.). Heaven awaits the transference of power from God Himself to the hands of the second Man.

That book (v. 8) entitles the One who takes it, to "power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

Verse 11 introduces another circle - the vast circle of the unfallen, glorious creatures which, according to their Creator, excel in might - the angels. I have connected in my own reading and thought some words from Heb. 12:22 and the first phrase of verse 23. What is meant by "an innumerable company of angels,... the general assembly"? I have illustrated it like this: there is a change in the administration of the government of the country. All the ambassadors are called in which were sent out by the other government. Here is a change of government. How is God

governing this world? Providentially, and His providences are administered by angels. They are all called in now; the power is transferred to that Person referred to as the "Lion of the tribe of Jude"; and the former ambassadors rejoice to see that One take the reins of government, though they lost their places, mg it were. Heb. 2:5. "Unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come." That is what I take to be the meaning of those "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" of angels rejoicing here in seeing Christ receiving His earthly rights from God. His receiving those rights is the substance of the whole book of Revelation. First, He gets the title, then He takes possession.

There are three circles of praise here - first, the redeemed; second, the angels; and third, all creation. Verse 13 gives the third circle, the praise of all creation. How beautiful - the Lamb forever and ever worshiped! All ends in worship. All creation is brought under the effects of Him having received His rights on earth.

I hope you and I will enjoy more and more Christ on earth, and Christ in glory; as we follow Him in His sufferings here, think what the answer will be there.

"Jesus, Thou alone art worthy

Ceaseless praises to receive;

For Thy love and grace and goodness

Rise o'er all our thoughts conceive.

"With adoring hearts, we render

Honor to Thy precious name,

Overflowing with Thy praises,

Far and wide Thy worth proclaim.

"Praise Him! praise Him! praise the Savior!

Saints, aloud your voices raise-

Praise Him! praise Him!- till in heaven

Perfected we'll sing His praise."

Only One Altar: Two Thrones but Only One Altar

We want the reader to turn aside with us for a few moments and look at two thrones which are presented on the page of inspiration, one in the 6th of Isaiah, and the other in the 20th of Revelation. We shall do little more than introduce them to his notice, in the very words of the inspired penman, and then leave him to muse upon those solemn realities in the immediate presence of God.

1) "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Here then we have something peculiarly solemn. We have the throne of God, and the effect produced by that throne upon the heart of a man of like passions with ourselves. It is a serious thing to find oneself in the presence of God-to see ourselves in the light of His throne - to hearken to the sound of a voice that could move the very posts of the door. This truly is real work. All is laid bare here. Man sees himself in his true condition. He sees the deep moral roots of his being. He sees not only his acts, but his nature; not only what he has done, but what he is. He sees not only the negative, but the positive; not only what he is not, but what he actually is.

Thus it was with Isaiah when he got a view of himself in the light of the holiness of God. He discovered himself. He found out what he was, and the tale was easily told - the confession was brief, pointed, and profound. "Woe is me! for I am undone." This was the sum of the matter. It took in everything. It was no mere lip profession - no formal statement of an unfelt truth that "We are all sinners." Ah! no; it was deep and thorough work. The depths were reached. The arrow had entered the soul. Isaiah saw himself in the presence of the throne of God, an utterly undone man.

The throne at which we are now gazing has a special feature attached to it - a peculiar fact connected with it. There is an altar near at hand. Thanks be to God for this precious, this consolatory fact. There is grace and salvation for the guilty and undone. The guilt which the light of the throne reveals, the grace of the altar removes. "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

What grace shines in all this! What mercy in the fact that we can now have to do with a throne which has an altar attached to it-a throne of grace! The Lord be praised. This is a most weighty, telling, powerful fact. Grace is triumphant. It reigns "through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21).

2) But we must turn to another throne of which we read in Revelation 20. "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. AND WHOSOEVER WAS NOT FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE WAS CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE." vv. 11-15.

This is a throne of judgment. No grace, no mercy here. We look in vain for an altar in the vicinity of this throne. There is no such thing to be found. It is a scene of unmingled judgment. We have the claims of the throne - alas! alas! unanswered claims - without any of the provisions of the altar. "The books were opened" - those solemn records of the life and conduct of each. Yes, of each one in particular. There will be no such thing as escaping in the crowd - no getting off with mere generalities. The judgment will be intensely individual - awfully personal - "every man according to their works."

Reader, mark the character of the judgment: "according to their works." It is a fatal mistake to think that people will only be judged for rejecting the gospel. No doubt, the rejection of the gospel, wherever it has been heard, leaves people on the ground of judgment; but the judgment will be, in every case, according to a man's works. The inspired Apostle most distinctly teaches us in Eph. 5:3-6, and Col. 3:5, 6, that the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience on account of certain sins which he specifies. In short, it is perfectly plain from Scripture that each one, "small and great," will be judged according to his works. Solemn truth! Every one who dies in his sins - dies unrepentant, unconverted, unbelieving - will have to give an account of all his deeds. All will stand out in terrific array on the tablets of memory and conscience; all will be seen in the light of that throne from which nothing is hidden, and from which none can escape.

How dreadful to stand before the throne of judgment! How many a "Woe is me!" will break forth from the countless myriads who shall stand before that throne. But there will be no altar there! No flying seraph! No live coal! No mercy! No provision of grace! What then? "The lake of fire"! It cannot be otherwise if the judgment is to be according to every man's works. Fire unquenchable and the never dying worm must be the consequence with all who stand before the great white throne of Revelation 20. Men may deny this. They may try to put it from them. They may reason about it. But all their reasoning and all their philosophy, and all their learning, and all their criticism, can never shake the clear and solemn testimony of Holy Scripture. That testimony proves beyond all question, first, that those whose names are in the book of life shall not come into judgment at all, because Christ was judged in their stead. And second, that those whose names are not written in the book of life, shall be judged according to their works, and - appalling thought! - "cast into the lake of fire."

Our Hope

It is a "good hope" (2 Thess. 2:16).

It is a "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13).

It is a "living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3).

It is "an anchor of the soul" (Heb. 6:19).

It is our "Lord Jesus Christ" Himself (1 Tim. 1:1).

It is a hope that will never make ashamed (Rom. 5:5).

Our hope is not at all like human hope. I may say, "I hope it will not rain today." But maybe it will rain, and maybe it will not. That hope is not a sure and certain hope. But our hope is not like that at all. There is no "maybe" in our hope. When we have for our Savior and Friend, on whom to rest, the GOD OF HOPE, then we have no uncertain ground for our confidence. In very truth, ours is a sure and certain hope. True, we do not see it yet, or it would not be hope. But we do know that we shall find each hope of glory gained.

Our Power for Service

True service begins with Christ who is the Head; and when Christ is forgotten, then the service is defective. It has lost connection with the spring and fountain of all service, because it is from the Head that all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered increaseth. The body is of Christ, and He loves it as He loves Himself; and every one who would serve it, will best learn to do so by knowing His heart and purposes toward it. In a word, it is Christ who serves, though it may be through us. We are but "joints and bands," and if we are not derivative and communicative from Christ, we are useless.

To be useful, my eye and heart must be upon Christ, and not on the issue of my service; though if true to Him, the end will vindicate me too, however disheartening the interval. He who judges his service by present appearance, will judge by the blossom, and not by the fruit.

Our Safety

God for us is the first thing to get hold of. God is for His people all along the journey, and He is for each one of us. The weak, the young, the suffering, and the perplexed can say, God is for me. Weakness, ignorance, suffering, and every state in which one may find himself, is in itself a claim upon the living God. He is for me in that state. Then we have God with us, which is a step morally higher than God for us. All cause of fear is removed, all dread banished, as we realize that God is acting for us, and can and will dispose of difficulty and enemy as it pleases Him. But God with us is a mighty moral power. It controls and shapes the life, and directs in thought and action. What would be the influence on the life if a friend, in every respect superior to yourself, were continually at your side? Would it not impart a trustful confidence? Would there not be a constant reference to your friend? Would not his will dominate yours?

Then this naturally leads up to another thing, we with God, and we for God. We with Him gives the quiet, happy consciousness of communion. He with us controls all. We with Him is our joy and gladness. Is all this so? Then in all life act for Him. In all service; in all testimony; in all the multitudinous details of life we ought to be for Him- His interests our supreme care. To sum up, we have-

First, God for us-no fear.

Second, God with us-our practical safeguard.

Third, we with God-our communion.

Fourth, we for God-our life's object.

The Path of Loving Obedience

"And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" Deut. 10:12, 13.

It was all for their real good, their deep, full blessing, to walk in the way of the divine commandments. The path of wholehearted obedience is the only path of true happiness; and, blessed be God, this path can always be trodden by those who love the Lord.

This is an unspeakable comfort at all times. God has given us His precious Word, the perfect revelation of His mind; and He has given us what Israel had not, even His Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts, whereby we can understand and appreciate His Word. Hence our obligations are vastly higher than were Israel's. We are bound to a life of obedience by every argument that could be brought to bear on the heart and understanding.

And surely it is for our good to be obedient. There is indeed "great reward" in keeping the commandments of our loving Father. Every thought of Him and of His gracious ways, every reference to His marvelous dealings with us - His loving ministry, His tender care, His thoughtful love - all should bind our hearts in affectionate devotion to Him, and quicken our steps in treading the path of loving obedience to Him. Wherever we turn our eyes, we are met by the most powerful evidences of His claim upon our heart's affections, and upon all the energies of our ransomed being. And, blessed be His name, the more fully we are enabled by His grace to respond to His most precious claims, the brighter and happier our path must be. There is nothing in all this world more deeply blessed than the path and portion of an obedient soul. "Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them." Psalm 119:165. The lowly disciple, who finds his meat and his drink in doing the will of his beloved Lord and Master, possesses a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. True, he may be misunderstood and misinterpreted; he may be dubbed narrow and bigoted, and suchlike; but none of these things move him. One approving smile from his Lord is more than ample recompense for all the reproach that men can heap upon him. He knows how to estimate at their proper worth the thoughts of men; they are to him as the chaff which the wind drives away. The deep utterance of his heart, as he moves steadily along the sacred path of obedience, is

"Let me my feebleness recline

On that eternal love of Thine,

And human thoughts forget;

Childlike attend what Thou wilt say,

Go forth and serve Thee while 'tis day,

Nor leave Thy sweet retreat."

In the closing verses of Deuteronomy 10, the lawgiver seems to rise higher and higher in his presentation of moral motives for obedience, and to come closer and closer to the hearts of the people. "Behold," he says, "the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." What a marvelous privilege to be chosen and loved by the possessor of heaven and earth! What an honor to be called to serve and obey Him! Surely nothing in all this world could be higher or better. To be identified and associated with the Most High God, to have His name called upon them, to be His peculiar people, His special possession, the people of His choice, to be set apart from all the nations of the earth to be the servants of Jehovah and His witnesses. What, we may ask, could exceed this, except it be that to which the Church of God, and the individual believer are called?

Assuredly, our privileges are higher, inasmuch as we know God in a higher, deeper, nearer, more intimate manner than the nation of Israel ever did. We know Him as the God and Father of the

Lord Jesus Christ, and as our God and Father. We have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts, and leading us to cry, Abba, Father. All this is far beyond anything that God's earthly people ever knew or could know; and, inasmuch as our privileges are higher, His claims upon our hearty and unreserved obedience are also higher. Every appeal to the heart of Israel should come home with augmented force to our hearts, beloved Christian reader; every exhortation addressed to them should speak far more powerfully to us. We occupy the very highest ground on which any creature could stand. Neither the seed of Abraham on earth, nor the angels of God in heaven could say what we can say, or know what we know. We are linked and eternally associated with the risen and glorified Son of God. We can adopt as our own the wondrous language of 1 John 4:17, and say, "As He is, so are we in this world." What can exceed this, as to privilege and dignity? Surely nothing save to be, in body, soul, and spirit, conformed to His adorable image, as we shall be, ere long, through the abounding grace of God.

Well then let us ever bear in mind - yea, let us have it deep, deep down in our hearts - that according to our privileges are our obligations. Let us not refuse the wholesome word obligation as though it had a legal ring about it. Far from it; it would be utterly impossible to conceive anything further removed from all thought of legality than the obligations which flow out of the Christian's position. It is a very serious mistake to be continually raising the cry of, Legal! Legal! whenever the holy responsibilities of our position are pressed upon us. We believe that every truly pious Christian will delight in all the appeals and exhortations which the Holy Spirit addresses to us as to our obligations, seeing they are all grounded upon privileges conferred upon us by the sovereign grace of God, through the precious blood of Christ, and made good to us by the mighty ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Paul in Prison at Philippi

In this day of difficulty and declension, it is of vast importance for the believer to be in dependence upon God, and in obedience to His Word. We know that the blessed Lord is the only One who ever trod this path in perfection. The Apostle Paul knew what it was to walk on the safe ground of dependence upon God, having no confidence in the flesh, "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus"; and just in proportion as the same thing characterizes us, we have power against evil and for testimony. Acts 16 gives us a very striking instance of it in Paul at Philippi.

When Paul and his companions entered that city to which the Lord had called them, they were soon found in the place "where prayer was wont to be made" (v. 13), where Lydia's heart was opened to receive the things of the Lord. There is no doubt the enemy knows the power of prayer in the saints, and does all he possibly can to hinder it. As they went to prayer from Lydia's house, the damsel with a spirit of divination cried many days, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Paul perceived that what was said, though true enough in itself, was not of God, but of Satan. Yet Paul patiently waited the many days before availing himself of God's power to expose and suppress the enemy's opposition. "Paul... turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

Evidently Paul was in communion, and, therefore, in a condition of soul for God to manifest His power through him. This victorious act of divine power over Satan set in arms against Paul the masters, the magistrates, and the multitude, resulting in Paul and Silas receiving many stripes, and being cast into the worst place in prison, with their feet made fast in the stocks. This was as far as God allowed man, under Satanic influence, to go. But mark what wonderful things followed in that prison.

At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God, which the prisoners heard. Suddenly there was a great earthquake; the foundations of the prison were shaken; all the prison doors were thrown open; every man's bands were loosed; the jailor was converted under a sermon of eleven words, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house - the reality of his conversion being shown in the good works upon God's servants.

Here, observe, praise followed prayer before this marvelous intervention of God in favor of His servants. Now, did all this divine display exalt them with pride, and throw them off their guard, and from the ground of dependence? Oh, no! For, note, when the magistrates had become conscious of their error, and had come to the prison to entreat these men of God to come out and leave the city, it is written that Paul and Silas went out of prison, and entered into the house of Lydia. They returned to the house of prayer, as Peter also did from prison; they went back to Gilgal, as we have it in another scripture in a former dispensation. When they had comforted their brethren, they left the city in the power of prayer, and to continue their labors in obedience to the word of the Lord.

Beloved child of God, the same enemy is at work with equally adapted opposition now as then; but we have the same resource, and it is Paul who said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Are not these things written for our learning? And are they not our examples? Then may we have grace to learn and follow them for Christ's sake.

Peace and Trust

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever." Isa. 26:3, 4.

Perfect peace is then inseparably connected with perfect trust. And it is so even in society. How long would the wife have peace if she did not trust her husband? How long would the husband have peace if he did not trust his wife?

How long would partners in business have peace in business relations if they did not trust each other? The whole basis of society is trust, and if trust is destroyed society falls into ruin. How much more it is so in our relations with God.

There can be no peace in mind and heart and will, unless there is trust in God.

A.T.P.

Then trust Him. weary heart,

Let care and anguish cease;

Take from thy Saviour's hands,

Thine heritage of peace.

Peace: What Is It?

Have you found peace? is a question frequently put to people, and it may be there are many who do not exactly understand the question, or know how to answer it. They look upon "peace" as a certain feeling of calm repose in their own minds; and inasmuch as they feel anything but that, they come to the conclusion that they have not yet found peace.

Further, there are many, we doubt not, who think that unless they experience this feeling of repose they cannot be Christians at all; and, seeing they have it not, they conclude that they have neither part nor lot in the matter.

Finally, there are many who think that if only they possessed this peace they should never again have to bewail the inward workings of evil. They imagine that true gospel peace and indwelling sin are wholly incompatible; and seeing, alas! that they are painfully conscious of a mass of evil within, they conclude that they have yet to wait for the enjoyment of peace. Thus do all these three classes of persons, by harboring wrong ideas on the subject of peace, only augment their sore trouble.

1) First let me say distinctly and emphatically that true gospel peace is not a mere feeling of calm repose in the mind. It is something far more solid and settled than that. It is a certain condition into which the believer is introduced by the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Take the following passage of Scripture: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5:1.

Is it a mere feeling in the mind? Clearly not. It is a blessed condition into which the soul is introduced by the death and resurrection of Christ. No doubt the heart will feel happy and peaceful in proportion to the simplicity of its faith in this grand truth that all sins are forgiven, and that the soul is as justified as God can make it, as justified as Christ Himself. But the Apostle does not say, Being justified by faith we have a happy feeling of peace in our minds. This would never do. Our feelings are as uncertain and changeable as the winds. The peace of which this noble passage speaks is as stable as the throne of God itself.

Again: "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36). Does this mean preaching a certain feeling in the mind? No, but a glorious proclamation of peace between God and man, founded on the accomplished work of Christ who, having "made peace through the blood of His cross," is Himself our peace in the presence of God. It would be a very serious mistake to suppose that "peace" as spoken of in the above passages is only a calm and comfortable frame of mind. It is far more. It is not our feeling of peace, but God's foundation of peace. This makes all the difference. We should never confound our sense of a thing with the thing itself, a plain fact with the effect which that fact, when known, may produce upon us.

In the gospel I get divine truth, to be received in a divine way, and to be productive of divine results. It is not an intellectual assent to a certain proposition which I receive as true because I have no reason to doubt it. It is a poor, guilty rebel, a slave, an enemy, receiving from God,

through grace, pardon, liberty, and reconciliation, through the precious sacrifice of the cross.

Will such a one not have happy feelings? No doubt; but the feelings must never be mistaken for the blessed truth which gives them birth. Peace is a divine, independent, changeless reality based upon the blood of Christ, proclaimed on the authority of the Word of God, and received by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit.

If, therefore, I were asked the question, Have you peace? should I look in at myself and shape my reply according to what I find there? By no means. What then? I should say, Yes, thank God, I have peace, perfect peace, peace as perfect as Christ could make, or God could give. Nor can anything ever disturb my peace, inasmuch as God has preached it to me "by Jesus Christ... Lord of all." If anything could disturb my peace, then Jesus Christ would not be "Lord of all"; for whatever caused the disturbance would be lord of Him, which it were blasphemy to suppose for a moment. My feelings could be easily disturbed, but God's foundation never can.

2) And now one word to those who think that unless they have this inward feeling of repose they are not Christians at all. I do not believe their idea is borne out either by Scripture or Christian experience. It is not that I want to justify doubts or fears, or lead any to be satisfied with themselves or their present practical state. Far from it. I fully believe that doubts and fears are as dishonoring to Christ as they are subversive of our own true peace of mind. They are wholly unwarrantable. They spring, in many cases, from a false apprehension of the real nature of gospel peace; from looking at self instead of at Christ; from confounding our enjoyment of peace with the peace itself; from looking at what we are to God, instead of looking at what God is to us. But, from what cause soever they spring, we should judge and disallow them just as we should any other evil thought or feeling that might spring up in our minds.

But while it is unquestionably wrong to harbor doubts when God has spoken peace, or to harbor fear when Christ has made peace, it is much more wrong to call in question our personal interest in Christ because we do not feel quite as happy as we might or ought. This is just allowing Satan to gain his end. Should I doubt my natural existence because I have a headache? Surely not. And why doubt my spiritual existence, my life in Christ, because my heart is not as happy as I wish it to be?

Very many true Christians, genuine, earnest, devoted souls, are afflicted with doubts and fears at times. Indeed, in proportion to their seriousness will be their anxiety until they learn to look away from themselves and rest simply in Christ. Not to feel anxious until I know on divine authority that Christ has put away all my sins, and perfectly satisfied, on my behalf, the claims of the throne of God, would only prove hardness of heart and indifference as to sin and holiness. May God preserve my reader from aught of this! God forbid that he should ever cease to be anxious until his anxiety is hushed by the blood of the cross! It is to be feared that many have a flippant way of talking about peace, and finding peace, which argues a very shallow apprehension of the evil of sin, the claims of divine holiness, or the solemn reality of the cross. We should ever remember that though peace has been made, without any demand upon us, yet it cost Christ everything. We do not lose aught of the simplicity and certainty of divine peace by having a deep sense of its solemnity. Quite the opposite. The more fully I apprehend what had to be done, the more thankful I am that Christ has done it. But I must never forget what it cost Him to do it.

3) In conclusion, let me add a word for those who are troubled with the thought that the enjoyment of settled peace is incompatible with the sense of indwelling sin. This is a serious mistake which must produce great darkness and heaviness of soul. The most advanced believer upon earth has sin dwelling in him. "In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing," must be our language to the very end of the chapter. "If we say that we [believers] have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8.

It is interesting and consolatory to see that in the law of the peace offering leavened bread was to be offered because of the evil in the worshiper; for leaven is, without so much as a single exception, only symbolic of evil (Lev. 7:13).

So also in the "two wave loaves" leaven was permitted because they were typical of the people of God who have evil in them, and who will have it so long as they are in the body (Lev. 23:17).

God knows all about us. He knows the very worst concerning us, but yet He loves us, and has made provision for the evil which He knows to be in us, so that it should not in the smallest degree interfere with our peace. If the evil be suffered to act and show itself, it will very seriously interfere with our enjoyment of peace, and put us upon our faces before the Lord in confession and self-judgment. God the Holy Spirit who dwells in us cannot sanction a single thought of evil indulged. All must be judged. The struggle must be maintained. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17).

This conflict will never cease in the believer until that blissful moment when he shall lay aside his body of humiliation. Hence, if indwelling sin were to hinder our peace, it would come to pass that not a single member of the family of God could ever enjoy one moment's peace. Thank God, such is not the case. Our peace does not rest upon sinless flesh, but upon the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

The Person of the Lord Jesus Christ

The daring speculations of Gnosticism caused much trouble in the early Church. They perverted the pure gospel, and sought to undermine the blessed truth of the Trinity, especially attacking the deity of the Son. Numerous other evils followed, including the Manichean heresy in the third century; but it remained for the fourth century to witness the worst and most serious attack of all. This assault on the truth of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ came more from within the pale of the professing church than had any previous one. It was propounded by a man whose name was Arius, of the city of Alexandria, Egypt; he was known as a presbyter in the church there, and before long his heterodoxy had spread and caused division and grief in every quarter. But let us look at the moment chosen of the devil to let loose this deadly attack.

The Emperor Constantine had ascended the throne of the Roman Empire in 312 A.D., and in March of the following year he issued an edict giving to Christians full religious toleration. From that point the fusion of state and church accelerated rapidly, and before long they were fully entwined. Church leaders were present at state affairs, and state officials presided at church councils. Prior to this time the church had been free and independent of the government. Its authority was from the Lord in heaven, and it made its way (not with, but) against a hostile heathen government. Ten different times the devil had stirred up the whole Roman Empire to suppress and, if possible, exterminate all profession of faith in Christ. Thousands upon thousands of Christians had died under every form of atrocity that worshipers of demon-backed idols could invent. But now all was changed, and Satan had transformed himself for the present from a roaring lion to an angel of light. As with the stroke of a pen, of a man who soon assumed to be the head of the church while at the same time he was official high priest of the heathen, all was reversed and it became expedient to profess Christianity if one wanted to advance in the world. Under this artificial stimulation an abundant crop of tares grew apace in the wheat field. Mere professors now swelled the ranks everywhere.

It was at this propitious time that the enemy launched a blasphemous attack against the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and there were enemy implanted agents to take up the wicked doctrine and carry it far and wide.

The impious teaching of Arius denied to both the Son and to the Holy Spirit "true, proper, essential, and eternal deity." It made the blessed Son of God to be only the highest of created beings, and not Himself the eternal God. How like the devil's enmity against the Seed of the woman is this attack. Of course the enemy could not alter the fact of His deity, but by denying it he could bring dishonor to that peerless One who is worthy of all homage; and by seducing fallen men with it he could ensure their eternal damnation. Truly he is "a liar" and "a murderer from the beginning."

But God had foreseen such attacks and had most carefully guarded the eternal deity of Christ in many places in both the Old and New Testaments. Think of such a verse as this:

"For unto us [Israel] a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isa. 9:6. Many other Old Testament scriptures bear the same witness. Then in the New Testament, can anything exceed the fullness and beauty of John 1:1-3?

"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. All things were made by Him."

Here it is plainly stated that He was there in the beginning; He was not created but, go back as far as you will, He was there. He was a distinct Person in the Godhead, for He was with God. He was Deity Himself, for He was God. In the Greek there is no article before that last word "God." It does not say He was "the" God, for that would exclude the Father and the Holy Spirit; but He Himself was God, leaving full room for the Father and the Spirit, who were also God. Nor does it say that He was "a" God, for that would be a flat denial of His own essential deity. He "was God," not "a" God, although modern wicked cults pervert this verse to make it say He was only "a" God. One of these cults has even gone so far as to put out a supposed translation of the Bible (the Concordant) in which they give both Greek and English with this false rendering. It is surely nothing less than the work of the enemy who sowed this seed in the days of Constantine.

A well-known writer has said: "Rom. 9:5 is a rich and precise expression of Christ's underivative and supreme Godhead, equally with the Father and the Spirit. 'Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.' The efforts of the heterodox critics bear witness to the all-importance of the truth, which they vainly essay to shake by unnatural efforts which betray the dissatisfaction of their authors. There is no such emphatic predication of supreme deity in the Bible; not of course that the

Father and the Holy Spirit are not co-equal, but because the humiliation of the Son in incarnation and the death of the cross made it fitting that the fullest assertion of divine supremacy should be used of Him."

Satan chose his man with skill equal to that used in selecting the time for the dissemination of this daring blasphemy. Arius possessed many natural qualities that would gain friends and influence people; he had a very attractive personality, and led a strict and blameless life, and had a rather humble exterior under which he hid his personal vanity and ambition. A man without these advantages would not have suited the enemy's designs, and we need to remember the same is true today. There are many "antichrists" abroad today who deny the Father and the Son, and many of them have lovely exteriors, and smooth words and fair speeches with which to deceive the hearts of the simple. It is a fact that their number has increased according to that word to Timothy: "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2 Tim. 3:13.

Let us not stop with reading about the deceivers, the next verses contain a word of encouragement and exhortation. "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make 'thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction " in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly

furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3:14-17.

Yes, "continue THOU." There can never be a sufficient reason to give up. Evil men may get worse and worse; fellow-Christians may become weary and discouraged; nevertheless, "continue thou." What a word to each one of us individually! And let us remember too that the Holy Scriptures are the solid rock upon which we stand, and that neither man nor demon can ever shake them. They are our resource in a day of infamy, and they can not only make us wise unto salvation, but fully equip each of us for every good work.

Political Parties

I need hardly assure your readers that I have no desire that they should meddle in politics; I do not do so myself, nor do I think that a Christian ought. He believes that God governs, and governs with a view to the glory of Christ, and that He will infallibly bring about His purpose....

Parties are all alike to me; they are all alike guilty, and have all alike had their part in what is going on.... We must remember that politicians have no idea of principles, but only of existing influences to which they must be subject.... I take no side with any party-I distrust them all....

God holds the reins or, loosens them. The Christian may walk in peace through it all, waiting for God's Son from heaven, and keeping the word of His patience; having a specially blessed place of testimony in the midst of it all, but a lowly one, content to be nothing in the world which has rejected Christ, and is ripening for His judgment. Their part is to keep His word and not deny His name.

The Pounds

Luke 19:12-27

The context of this parable tells us why our Lord spoke this parable. It was "because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Christ is the nobleman, and He is still away, waiting till the time arrives to receive His kingdom in its manifestation.

This must not be confounded with the hope of the coming of our Lord. The parable refers to Christ receiving the kingdom, and is spoken of in connection with Jerusalem, which is subsequent to the saints being caught up to meet the Lord in the air. It is, however, worthy of note, that the parable represents the same persons who receive the pounds when our Lord went away, as being alive when He returns and calls those servants to give an account of their stewardship, though ages may, indeed, roll on between His going away and His return. All were to be faithful while they await His return, and all must give an account.

No doubt, everyone has been struck with the similarity between this parable and that of the talents, in Matthew 24. The chief difference is, that there each received a different sum - one, ten; one, five; and one, one; whereas here, all receive the same amount - one pound. May not its application thus be, not so much to specific gifts, as to the responsibility, as servants that attaches to a profession of Christianity. Not natural gifts, but gifts connected with our profession. Here the persons are described as servants; and, as in many other places, those who profess to be servants are accounted as such, and made responsible accordingly.

There is another class spoken of - citizens. These sent a message after Him, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." And of these we read, "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." These are, doubtless, primarily the Jews; they are His citizens, though the language of defiance is the language of man universally.

But the others are servants, and two of them made a good use of their pound, and received a "Well done," and a reward, according to the increase gained. But the other returned his pound, and insolently charged evil on his master. He had laid up the pound "in a napkin," instead of trading with it. He, however, owns his master as "lord," and was surely bound to do his best for his master; and even if he had thought him an austere man, he was nonetheless responsible to do his duty; for the other was his master.

The rewards - ruling over cities - point out its more immediate connection with Israel by-and-by; nevertheless, it strikingly illustrates our duty as servants of Christ. We call Him Lord and Master, and so He is; and we, as His servants, are bound to serve and obey Him. A mighty privilege indeed it should be counted by us to do anything for such a Lord, to whom we owe all we are and all we have. But here it is our responsibility. A pound is given to each of us, with the injunction, "Occupy till I come." Use what gifts you have, not for yourself, but for your Master; your reward will

be by-and-by.

The pound which the unfaithful servant had is given to him who had gained 10 pounds, which brings out the important principle, that he who uses his gifts, has more given to him; while he who does not, loses even that which he had. How similar this is to that solemn word, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" May we all be found faithfully using the gifts God has given us. It will surely be for our good; for if we take His yoke upon us, we shall find rest to our souls, and it will be for His glory. How good it would be for some to be using the gifts they have, rather than to be lamenting over the want of gift, remembering the word that "he that watereth, shall be watered also himself."

Poverty and Riches: Twin Dangers

"Give me neither poverty nor riches" (Pro. 30:8) was a wise request, and "Be content with such things as ye have," is often a needed injunction; for we are not always mindful that He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." None perhaps know the trials connected with poverty or riches, but those who are actually brought into such circumstances. But many of the Lord's people have been tried by one or the other. Poverty is easily understood to be a trial. When it really comes, its pinch is keenly felt. To be rich is more congenial to human selfishness, and often gives the owner a place of honor and distinction among men, so that it is only realized to be a trial by those whose consciences are exercised before the Lord.

In poverty, if God be not the refuge and strength, if He be not trusted for sustainment and deliverance, the heart soon becomes despondent, or busy to invent contrivances, sometimes not very honorable, to force a way of escape. Efforts of this kind, under such circumstances, are by no means uncommon, and the painful nature of the trial is often pleaded in justification of unbelieving ways. But worldly wisdom is not the wisdom that comes down from above, nor is carnal stratagem after the pattern of the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. The contrivances of unbelief only cripple faith and, sooner or later, bring dishonor on the name of the Lord; such actings also spoil the Christian's testimony for the Lord, and often embitter his path for the remainder of his wilderness journey. A sense of the grace of God in not having spared His own Son, but in delivering Him up for us all, often wakes up faith, and puts unbelief to shame. But how many have dishonored the Lord in time of poverty!

In earthly prosperity, if God be not hearkened to and obeyed, some may have painfully to learn that "riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away" (Pro. 23:5), or their path may be beset with humblings, disappointment, spiritual leanness, and regrets, with faith weakened, and hope sadly dimmed.

That soul alone is happy who knows he is the Lord's, and can truly say, He loved me, and gave Himself for me. Assured by the Word of God that he is accepted in the Beloved, and loved by the Father as He loves the Son, he enters into the truth that he is kept here only to do His will. To such, every question resolves itself in this, What is the Lord's will? And a dependent, obedient heart lives not to itself, but to Him who died and rose again.

Perhaps there is no greater trial to which a child of God can be exposed than the rapid pouring in of wealth. Few have been able to bear it. Many have fallen grievously by it. Some have become so intoxicated by it as to plunge themselves into foolish and pernicious occupations. Others have been drawn back again into the world, who seemed for a while to have run well in ways of separation from it; while some who began this new responsibility as God's stewards have grown up to be patrons, and even to seek a place of honor among men by it. In fact, whatever be our circumstances, all God's people have painfully to learn that in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing, and that we cannot bring forth fruit except we are abiding in our Lord Jesus. Nothing else can possibly preserve us in the path that glorifies God. Whether we have poverty or riches,

each believer has alike to cry, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." To be happy in the Lord day by day, in the lowly path of dependence and obedience, is of the highest importance, for nothing can be ministered by us for His glory without this. We do well to remember His precious words, "Abide in Me,... for without Me ye can do nothing." John 15:4, 5.

How many poor saints have been sweetly sustained and comforted by remembering that Jesus was poor! When He went about from place to place ministering the glad tidings of the kingdom, are we not told that certain women "ministered to Him of their substance"? (Luke 8:2, 3). And, when He died for us on the cross, what earthly possessions did He leave? All we read is that they parted His garments among them, and for His vesture they did cast lots.

Some years ago a Christian was lovingly visiting a cobbler who was very poor, and residing in the west of England. An earnest servant of the Lord accompanied him, who sometimes gave words of hearty counsel in the form of lines of poetry. They both sought to comfort the tired cobbler in his poverty, but before taking leave of him one said, "I will give you, dear brother, a couple of lines:

"When cruse and barrel both are dry,

We then will trust in God most high."

After pausing a moment the other said, "Finish it; you have not completed your words of counsel." But he replied, "I have nothing more to say," and intimated that he wished to convey to the poor cobbler that, like Elijah, he should put his trust in God. Then said the other, "I would like to add,

'When cruse and barrel both are full,

To God we'll consecrate the whole.'"

These surely are words in season for rich as well as for poor. To trust in time of need, and to yield ourselves and all He entrusts us with to Himself in time of abundance, are alike the path of faith. Happy those who under all circumstances are so before the Lord, and constrained by His love, as to be wholehearted for Him at all times and under all circumstances!

Prayer

The more spiritual a soul is, the more prayerful it will be, because it is then most occupied in heart and desire about, the things of God.

Our prayers will be few and feeble if our walk with God, is of a low character:

If we have narrow views of God and His purposes, our prayers will be also narrow and confined.

If we, are unstable, unbelieving, and unspiritual, our, prayers may return unanswered.

Faith, a good conscience, a large heart, knowledge of the mind, and will of God, and a sense of our utter weakness, are the proper requisites of prayer.

Purpose of Heart for Christ: Two Beautiful Instances

John 12 and 20

What I want to see among us, dear friend, is a purpose of heart. We need not mere knowledge, but purpose of heart, individuality of love to Christ, that He, and He alone, should be the magnet; every heart turning to Him; the Lord satisfying the heart; Christ the polestar drawing up all our hearts to Him as we go through the wilderness.

As to Mary of Bethany, there was no particular light in sitting at His feet; she simply loved her Lord. In John 12:3 she gave an expression of love of the most costly order - not only the box, but she wiped His feet with her hair (hair given to woman as an ornament), and "the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." In Mary's mind there was only one thought; and only one Person present could read the enigma of her strange doings. Did she wish to make a perfume? Did she even think of His death? No, personal attachment to the Lord alone, and the heart drawn up to God to know what to do to express it, to hear from Him how to put honor on Jesus. Her thought was, What most costly can I give Him? Judas was quite the opposite - How much shall I put in the bag? And out of the abundance of the heart both spoke. (How strange the way human nature works. He bids them gather up the fragments, that they may see that with God there is more in the end than in the beginning, for those who need; and now, when the One that God delights to honor is present, they think of the poor!)

Then she got such a guidance from God! She did not know that He was going to die, but she heard from Him first that she was anointing Him for His burial. Her whole mind being set on Christ, God suggested to her the suited act that she had not the intelligence to understand. The power of the Lord let her into something new. Oh, what a beautiful thing is the retired walk of one full of Christ, and she a woman! A channel prepared of God for His own purposes. What could have been wiser? It was in beautiful season too. God honors His people by letting their loving purpose do the very thing He wants for His Son. She did the very thing that showed she was in practical fellowship, because Christ was the Object. What a beautiful subject to speak with her upon - One whom God had thus put honor upon.

Where there is purpose of heart, it is brought into a most blessed place of privilege (chap. 20). As to Mary of Magdala, her thought was, My Lord lies buried; I will go and visit the spot. But all her hopes were blasted when she found the stone gone. She went to the disciples. We have lost the object of our love, she says in effect.

The disciples had not the purpose of heart Mary had (v. 10). "The disciples went away again unto their own home" shows how low in love even the best of His disciples were. Mary's home was the sepulcher of her Lord! No sympathy or interest lay elsewhere, and she was riveted to the spot. No doubt the Lord kept her there to reap the reward of her unwearied love.

There was more attractiveness to her in Christ than in anything else; the angels did not surprise her (v. 12). What were they to the One she wanted? Nothing could turn her off. The needle of her

compass was quite true to the one point; her soul was in a state for all that honored Christ to pass before her (v. 13). They drew from her the spring of her sorrow. "My Lord," as if hers alone.

What a touching scene follows (vv. 14, 15). The Lord risen from the grave, cognizant of the state of all His disciples, saw this poor woman absorbed with Him, and communed with her to prove to her that His love for her was greater than hers for Him. "Whom seekest thou?" "If thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." Though dead, she still wanted to have Him. Poor, stupid thing that she was, she told her living Lord, Oh, but you are dead! But He said, "Mary." Whatever there was in that word, whatever the manner of naming her, she turned around with "Master!" She had now a living Christ. Mark how she got there. The Lord interfered- "Touch Me not" (v. 17). She got the place of messenger of resurrection - blessed post! How did she get it? With full purpose of heart, occupied so with the Lord that she was above all objects, and neither angels nor disciples turned her aside. What a heart she must have had in going forth with the message to gladden and console the disciples! Here was her reward; all through she had no thought of personal devotedness; she thought of Christ. He had her heart. If your eye be single, you cannot divide between having an object and following it.

"Touch Me not;... but go to My brethren." In heaven He could recognize them in this new relationship. "My Father, and your Father; and... My God, and your God" - blessed position of sons of God brought out at Pentecost! A woman got that truth first of all simply by purpose of heart, beyond faith. Himself the Object of worship in heaven increases the quantity of truth revealed, God finding and bringing souls into purpose of heart, into scenes where Christ came. Knowledge is useless without the heart, but they ought not to be divided. I would rather have less knowledge, but real purpose of heart for Christ, and Christ Himself.

These (I mean women) are not vessels to be put forward outwardly, but Christ ought to have been anointed for His burial; Christ ought to have had someone to watch His tomb; and God used them to honor Him. These are perhaps the two greatest instances of Christ attracting the heart after Him, and their following in purpose of heart; therefore, God uses them to anoint Christ, and to greet His Son after His resurrection. Oh, for more purpose of heart for Christ among all the children of God!

The Race

After all has been said for great deeds, dear Christian reader, patient continuance in well doing deserves the greatest praise. Bright occasions of self-denial or victory are worthy of our high admiration and thanksgiving, but a Christian life lived in patient continuance in well doing, how excellent it is! Hundreds of Christians begin well; few comparatively continue patiently in well doing. Really, the story of many Christians' lives is almost like that of the old fable of the tortoise and the hare. We remember how briskly the hare began her race, laughing at the prospect of the poor, slow, old tortoise ever getting in before her, and how that, when she had neared the winning post, she said she would just take a nap till the tortoise came up; and then she would dash in first. But she slept longer than she had meant to do, and all the time the slow plodder kept on and on; and so it was that, after all, his slow pace won the race. Or, rather, we should say, that despite his slow pace, he won the race.

Let them be plodding ever so slowly, but if they are on the race course, patiently continuing in well doing, we almost think they will exceed in the end some who make a fine start, but do little more.

We have no hesitation in saying that the most useful Christians known to us are those who have the most "stay" in them, and that our fitful friends who put on a great rush of energy now and then, are, as a rule, disappointing. We recall the happy service of some half a dozen young men in a poor district; and as we think of them, we remember first him of whom it used to be said, "You can rely on-, for he is always at his post." Our young friend never was late, and never forgot to do what he had engaged to perform; and this continued for some years. He was not the most brilliant worker of that little band, but he was the most reliable, for he was the most patient in well doing.

The other day we were hearing of another young man; he had begun his Christian career brightly, but, like so many, he had not continued with patience in well doing. What a position of danger is his! "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62.

If we are redeemed by Christ, we must be His disciples indeed, and follow Him. He does not offer us a bed of roses here; He offers us hardship. Those who would find in this world, which crucified their Lord, a place of ease, forget the cross. We cannot serve two masters. We must be out and out for Christ, or our Christianity is of little worth. And we say this, because a good heart for Christ gives the "stay" we need for our Christian life and work. One great reason, if not the reason, why there is not the patient continuance in well doing there should be in the Christian, is that there is a want of heart for Christ.

To point out an error without discovering the cause of it, and advancing the remedy, is poor physicianship; therefore we appeal to our Christian readers to make more of Christ in their hearts. Seek to have Him to you as your own personal Friend. Take your concerns to Him in private, tell Him your temptations, your difficulties, tell Him exactly what you feel to be your need, and what you know you ought to feel, but which you do not. He will meet all your wants, and that greatest

want the Christian can have; namely, insensibility to want. There is no state more sorrowful than that of spiritual numbness, that of not feeling our coldness, our dullness, our deadness. But if we open our hearts to Christ, He will meet every need, known and unknown.

The Riches of His Grace

The precious name of Jesus is, thank God, being sounded far and wide; and the truth of the forgiveness of sins and escape from judgment, through Him, is widely proclaimed; but we need to apprehend better the manner in which God blesses, and the fullness of His grace.

In the parable in Luke 15, the father did not content himself until the son - who had so disgraced his father's name, but who now had owned his sins - was clothed in the best robe, and ushered with ringed hand and well shod feet into the house. There that which was reserved for a distinguished guest, was prepared; the fatted calf was killed, and the son was to feast in company with his father. "They began to be merry."

Just so, our Savior God is not content with merely saving us from destruction, nor even with giving us a place in heaven, but brings us to the ocean of His love, where we may drink again of the riches of His grace and glory.

There we may contemplate the place of blessing into which we are brought "in Christ Jesus." "He hath made Him to be sin for us, [He] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor. 5:21.

Shall we ever fathom the depths to which Christ went, when He was made sin? No, never, throughout eternity! Never shall we rightly appreciate the sufferings of Calvary. But what joy to us to be able to look upon "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and to know that He, having been made sin, having borne all the judgment at the hands of a holy God, is now glorified; and that through His work upon the tree, this poor groaning world, now so leavened and corrupted by sin, will be brought into richest blessing.

All that had to be met, has been met. The basis has been laid, on the ground of which the whole earth, when cleansed from all evil, shall ring with praise to God. Then the thorn shall give place to the myrtle, and the desert blossom as a rose.

Yes, the work is finished.

Every question has been once and forever settled, and we who believe are brought into present blessing.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8:1.

"He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

"Ye are complete in Him" (Col. 2:10).

Not only are we cleared from all the judgment which we deserved, but we are brought into all the nearness and privilege in which the Lord Jesus Himself stands; with Him, joying in, and rejoicing before, His Father and His God.

May these wonderful truths have a deeper place in all our hearts. Then, indeed, will the Lord get truer praise, and richer worship will flow forth from us to our Father and our God.

The Righteousness of the Law

This expression, as many of our readers know, has been more exactly given as "the righteous requirement of the law." Taking it so, it has occasioned considerable difficulty from the place in which it is found. The connection shows that it is what is wrought out in the delivered soul-in those who have passed through the experience of chapter 7, and have practically learned that there is now "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," that "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" has delivered them 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." But if we have been delivered from the law, and from efforts to fulfill it, why is it that we are told that the righteous requirement of the law is still fulfilled in us? It is not to be supposed for one moment that the work of the Holy Spirit in us, that the life of the Christian, is now limited by the legal standard; still, it is mentioned. The reason for its introduction may be gathered from the preceding chapter. There, the standard before the soul was obedience to the law. "The good that I would" is simply this, the righteousness of the law; and hence, after showing the way of deliverance, the Apostle points out that "the good," which could never be attained while under the law, is now reached in a new And better way; that is, what the law required but never obtained is now produced in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. How much more besides, he does not say here.

Satisfied

There are few things more eminently desirable for a saint of God than the being able to say, I am satisfied. It is the gist of the psalmist's word, "My cup runneth over." Yet how few in this day of Christianity are abreast with the psalmist in this; how few are they who thoughtfully and thankfully sum up their present portion as believers in this one word, "satisfied." But, do we reflect upon the dishonor we do to Him who bought us with a price, when we exhibit the contrary, imputing to Him as we tacitly do that He has failed us in that which He counseled concerning us? For may we not conclude that this was distinctly implied in that which He undertook? Nor was it a trivial or unworthy task. We may put the proposition thus: I will take a poor, restless, wayward thing, willful and fitful, repining, disquieted, and discontented (which are distinct marks of man's fallen nature) and I will make him satisfied. And this, not by changing his character, improving his circumstances, gratifying his desires, or pandering his foibles, but by imparting an altogether new life, introducing altogether new tastes, and opening an altogether new field of occupation and enjoyment. And the same shall constitute a fitting and adequate expression now, as well as an eternal testimony, not only of God's ability to bless, but of His supreme delight in so blessing.

Now this He effects in a threefold way, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. First, by what He does for us; second, by what He is to us; and third, by what He makes us to be to Himself. It is a real discovery when a saint for the first time sees that His perfect love has done its very best for us. This is not the finding peace, but after peace is really known and enjoyed, there is a fuller discovery (have we all made it yet?) that that love which is perfect in itself - "so sweet, so full, so free" - that love which is so boundless and so changeless that it can never be enhanced or diminished, "love that no tongue can teach, love that no thought can reach," has bestowed upon us first of all, all that love could give! And not stopping there, it is really rendering to each of us a personal and incomparably devoted service which, having its foundation laid in the travail of His soul on Calvary, is being made good to us all along the way in this day of grace, by His session at the right hand of God in brightest glory! With enraptured hearts we gaze upon Him there, invested with heaven's highest dignity, enthroned in majesty, and crowned with glory and honor! How can we accept that He has won these new glories for Himself and will regale His own heart by sharing them with His bride through eternity, and yet not recognize that by the very love that He bears us, He has made it a necessity to Himself that besides the one incomparable work that He wrought on the cross, He should render to us every personal service that His thoughtful, tender interest in us could suggest as we pass through these toilsome scenes and difficult times? Scenes and times, however, which constitute that suited training ground which lies between our first knowledge of His grace and the fruition of it in endless glory.

Is there a circumstance in our path, that is no circumstance to, and has no place before, Him? Is there an exercise of our hearts that does not equally, though in a preeminent way, move His own? And can it be that one member suffering, all the members suffer, and one honored, all rejoice, and yet the Head be unaffected? On the contrary, as a Man in the glory, Head of His body the Church, He could say, "Why persecutest thou Me?" It told upon Him; it fell upon Him, and it does so still.

And He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. "He knows what sore temptations are, for He has felt the same." If I have a sorrow which He cannot share with me, and sympathize in, clearly I am at fault; it is an unholy sorrow! If He have a joy that I share not in, equally am I at fault; for said He not, "That they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves"? Oh! to be more in positive, practical communion with Him as co-sharers, He with us and we with Him, for God has "called us unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ." And should we, alas, sin, we have, blessed be His name, the ever-prevailing advocacy of the righteous One with the Father for our restoration; as when we sin not, there is the abiding priesthood to maintain us before God, according to the measureless value of the righteous work which He sacrificially wrought once for all. Thus there are, 1) His work of the cross, dying unto sin and bearing our sins; 2) His present service in priesthood and advocacy; 3) His personal interest, as devoted, as profound, in all that concerns His saints. He knows us by name, calls us by His voice, draws us by His love, participates in our sorrows, shares with us His joys, leads our praises, and deigns to give us His company, lighting up our path with the sweet sunshine of a favor and affection which is better than life. In presence of such self-sacrificing, devoted, unselfish love, can I possibly say that I am not satisfied with what He does for me? Shall we not, on the contrary, lovingly and gleefully attest, With the finest of the wheat He has fed me, and with honey out of the rock has He satisfied me?

But this introduces the second branch of our subject, for who but He is the finest of the wheat, and who but He the honey out of the rock? He satisfies us by what He is to us Himself. But have we really accepted this? Do we allow that God has ability to find an object that shall fully fill our hearts for time and eternity? And is that object a competent one to satisfy every divine desire of the soul by its intrinsic and extrinsic excellence? How surpassingly marvelous, when we come to think of it, is the fact that God, whose profound satisfaction in the Son of His love we adoringly behold, has caused the same divine satisfaction to repeat itself in each devoted, loving heart that is tutored to find its joy and delight in Him. It is no little thing to hold habitually before our hearts a happy and established conviction that we have Him personally as ours. A husband may do many things, yea, all that love and generosity could suggest, for the relatives of his wife; but she only could say, He is mine! And did he expend all that he possessed on them, it would not alter this patent fact nor change its character in the least. Whatever he did for them, were the service or sacrifice ever so great, could not in the remotest degree weaken or disturb her sole title to say, He is mine! This is our blessedness as to Him. He is ours. The world is indebted to Him for benefits it as much fails to recognize as to repay. Old Testament saints and saints millennial shall appreciate His grace and favor, and no less spread His glory and His fame. Heavenly intelligences too, those angelic beings that never sinned, shall raise aloud the voice, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb." But of all animated beings, none have the title which we have, to say, He is ours! It is the bride's unique title in the Bridegroom. He loves the Church and has given Himself for it. If then He be thus personally and only ours, how calculated is this to draw out toward Himself those responsive affections to which such an endearing and intimate relationship by its very nature gives rise! Holy, elevated affections, as sacred as sweet, which so exalted and excellent an object would fain inspire in our hearts in an ever deepening degree to the exultation of His own. And what is this but the divine affection reproduced in us? The loving answer to that which moves His own heart to exercise itself by night and by day in every loving, tender, thoughtful way, evincing unwearied consideration and solicitude for us in the vicissitudes of the daily path, and promising to itself an untold and crowning joy in sharing with us His own happiness forever! Ah! did we but know Him in all the peerless

excellence of His Person, the altogether lovely, should we not freely fully own He has indeed, most truly, satisfied us with Himself?

But there is a third way in which He satisfies us; namely, by what He makes us to be to His own heart. No earthly figure can express this. A man may take himself a wife from the gutter, or adopt a street-Arab as his child, first imparting physical cleansing, fitting attire, moral training, and liberal education; but he can never start at the point where God has started with us, for He begins in making us a new creation. Nor this alone; He gives us a new and divine relationship, constituting us as sons of God, the very relationship of Christ to the Father. And, further, He unites us eternally, by giving us the Holy Spirit, to Christ Himself in glory. Thus we have new creation, divine relationship, and eternal union as the threefold cord which binds us to the glorified Man on high. And now His heart here and there discloses the deep delight He has in what He has made us to be to Himself; and how much He thinks of us - His friends, His brethren, His body, His bride, the partner of His throne, and the sharer of His glories and His joys for all eternity! Is it not enough?

May every saint of God gratefully and joyfully own that He has satisfied our souls as with marrow and fatness; and therefore our mouths praise Him with joyful lips!

Scripture Note: Colossians 3:2

"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. 3:2.

In this scripture the word "affections" scarcely represents the meaning of the original. It refers to the mind and thoughts rather than to the affections. Some examples of its use will make this apparent. When the Lord rebuked Peter, saying, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," He added, "for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." Mark 8:33. That is, to give two other translations, "thou mindest not," or, "thy mind is not on the things that be of God." So in Phil. 2:5, where we read, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (See also Phil. 3:15, 16, 19, etc.) It is thus evident that the Apostle's exhortation refers to our minds and thoughts, and the connection of the passage will explain its force. In chapter 2:20 we are seen associated with Christ in His death, whereby we have died out "from the rudiments of the world," and have, as a consequence, only the place of dead men in this world. Through death with Christ, if through grace we have entered into it, we are morally outside of man, religious or otherwise, and man's world. But we are also "risen with Christ," and thereby are introduced into a new scene. We belong, through association with Him in resurrection, to the place where "Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (chap. 3:1). Consequently all our objects and interests are there; our "life is hid with Christ in God." It is on this basis, on the foundation of what is true of us as associated with Christ in death and in resurrection, that the exhortation is given, "Seek those things which are above," etc.; and again, "Have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." J.N.D. Trans. Our minds therefore should be conversant with the things that belong to that new place into which we have already been introduced. If it be asked, What are these things? the answer is easily given. All the glories of Christ, the various glories of His Person and offices, unfolded as they are by His personal and relative names; all the Father's things, which are also the Son's (John 16:14, 15), the manifold displays of glory connected with the Father's counsels for the exaltation of His beloved Son; and also all the spiritual blessings with which we are already blessed in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3). All these wondrous things are to fill and occupy the minds of Christians; and hence, as in Philippians 3, to "mind earthly things" is to contradict the truth of our profession, as being a practical denial of having died, and having been raised, with Christ. But if Christ possesses our hearts, our "minds" will always be engaged with Him and His things in the place where He is.

Scripture Note: Hebrews 3:1

Heb. 8:1

According to the truth of this epistle, believers are seen as a company of pilgrims-Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of their profession (confession), being on high - journeying on through the wilderness to the rest-God's rest - which had been promised, and which remained for the people of God. (4:9.) It is to this, in fact, they were "called." This calling is "heavenly," because it comes from heaven and leads to heaven. This is strikingly set forth by the Apostle Peter, who says, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by [in] Christ Jesus," etc. (1 Pet. 5:10). No doubt there is at the same time a contrast implied. The Jews had an earthly calling, a calling to an earthly inheritance; but the Christian calling, as these Hebrew believers are reminded, is of a heavenly character - one connected with heavenly blessings, a heavenly inheritance, and heavenly hopes. Hence it was that, looking for nothing here, their hearts and expectations being outside of this scene, some of these faithful saints could take joy fully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had "in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (chap. 10:34). In 1 Corinthians 15 we learn that believers themselves are heavenly (v. 48). The first man (Adam) is of the earth, earthy; the second Man (Christ) "out of heaven." (See J.N.D. Trans.) All who belong to Adam follow his order; and all who belong to Christ are after His order. And so completely is this the case, that not only are believers heavenly in character, but they will also "bear the image of the heavenly"; that is, their resurrection bodies will be of the same kind and order as the glorified body of our blessed Lord. (See Phil. 3:21.) Nothing short of the recognition of this is Christianity. The inference is evident, that heavenly ways should distinguish a heavenly people; and this will be in proportion as we seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and our minds are on things above, and not on things on earth.

Scripture Notes: Hebrews 3:6; 1 Timothy 2:1-7; Luke 4:5-7

Heb. 3:6

This verse is more accurately rendered as follows: "But Christ as a Son over His house," etc. To take it as it stands in the King James Version would make it mean Christ's, or the Son's, house; but it is God's house. This is clearly seen from the comparison drawn. The Apostle and High Priest of our confession (Jesus) was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was in all His house; that is, in the house of God in the wilderness. But though both alike were faithful, Christ is more glorious in His Person than was Moses; for He built the house (see Matt. 16:18); and, moreover, having built all things, He is God. Again, if Moses was faithful in all His house, it was "as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after"; but Christ as a Son over His house. The glory of Christ thus outshines that of Moses, both as to His Person and as to His position; and we also learn that as Son He is supreme over the house of God. (Compare John 8:35, 36.) And we believers are the house, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. (See Eph. 2:22.) In the wilderness we are tested, and thus continuance or perseverance becomes the sign of reality.

2

1 Tim. 2:1-7

The ails of this scripture are most interesting. The Apostle exhorts that supplications, prayers, etc. be made for all men. The foundation of this precept lies in two great facts; first, that God is now presented to the world as a Savior God who desires that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; and, second, that there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. In accordance with this attitude of grace toward all men on God's part, and the universal scope of the death of Christ (giving Himself a ransom for all), Paul is commissioned (as a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher) to all. Not to the Jews only, but to the nations (the Gentiles); in fact, to all men. (Compare Col. 1:23.) We thus see that Christ died for all, that God desires all to be saved, and that Paul was sent with the gospel to all; and hence it is that, in fellowship with the heart of God, and the object of the death of Christ, as well as with the apostolic mission, believers are to pray for all men. But even while praying for all, the moment kings and all that are in authority are brought into view, the welfare of the saints in their worldly circumstances, as under human laws and government, is remembered. How true it is that God's affections and desires should govern those of His people!

3

Luke 4:5-7

As to the question whether Satan had really the power which he here claims, it is, like every other, answered by the Word of God itself. The point in the temptation, we apprehend, was to induce the

Lord, if that had been possible, to take the sovereignty of the kingdoms of the world from Satan's hands, instead of from God's, and apart from the cross. This will was instantly defeated by the invincible sword of the Spirit, "Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Passing onward to a later day, we shall find who did receive his sovereignty from Satan. In Rev. 12:3 we have the vision of a great red dragon, who is declared in verse 9 to be "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan," who has seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns (diadems) upon his head. In the next chapter (v. 1) we see a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns (diadems); and we read in the following verse that "the dragon gave him [the beast] his power, and his seat, and great authority." Without entering into details, we may say that this beast represents the head of the revived Roman Empire, and that he has all the forms of governmental power (for the number seven indicates completeness), and that ten kingdoms, the ten kingdoms of prophecy, as shown by the ten horns with their respective diadems, will form his dominion and own his sway. We learn then that Satan had at this period the sovereignty of the kingdoms of the world in his possession, and that he bestowed it upon one who worshiped him- as is evident from the second part of chapter 13. But Christ, as we have seen, refused the gift from Satan's hands. He, the blessed, perfect, dependent One, would take nothing, whether the "cup" or the glory, but from the hands of His Father.

And passing now still further on, we shall discover that it was only for a brief season that Satan was allowed to tempt man with his golden bait, and only for that brief season, in order to show out all the depths of man's evil heart before judgment fell both upon man and upon himself. God never surrenders His rights, or allows His purposes to be frustrated; and thus in chapter 19 we behold heaven opened, and a white horse issuing forth; "and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns [diadems]" (vv. 11, 12). At length the diadems are on the head of the rightful Sovereign, the One who has on His vesture and on His right thigh the name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Man is forever discrowned, and Christ having waited in patience for His Father's time for the accomplishment of His glorious purposes, has at length all things put under His feet. On His head are MANY diadems, for the fullness of all dominion is His, and His by right. He who has been the humbled One is now the exalted One on earth, as well as in heaven.

Scripture Notes: Psalm 69:8-9; Luke 23:31

1

Psalm 69:8, 9

It is in no wise to be inferred from this scripture that natural relationships may be refused. To be "without natural affection" is one of the features of the "perilous times" (2 Tim. 3). What we have here is wholly different. Before the commencement of our Lord's public ministry, He was, as we read, "subject" unto Joseph and Mary. In this relationship, as in every other, He was perfect, and, as such, our blessed example. But when, after His baptism and anointing, He entered upon His service, come as He was to do the will of God, He, as the true Nazarite, had "the consecration of His God... upon His head." And hence, until His work was finished, He was devoted solely and entirely to the glory of God. The claims of God henceforward absorbed Him; the zeal of His Father's house consumed Him; and consequently He became a stranger unto His brethren, and an alien unto His mother's children.

When, therefore, on one occasion someone interrupted Him, and said, "Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee," He answered, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" When, moreover, at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, His mother came to Him with a suggestion as to the wine, He replied, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." But when His work was ended, one thing only remaining to be accomplished, He, in the infinite tenderness of His perfect love in the relationship toward Mary which He has condescended to assume, committed her, ere "He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost," to the care of the disciple whom He loved. The application to ourselves is evident. Every relationship in which we are set is to be diligently observed. (See Eph. 5:22; 6:1-9; Col. 3:18; 4:1.) If, however, the Lord calls to special service, His claims are paramount, and, it might almost be added, exclusive. Accordingly, when He said to one, "Follow Me," and he replied, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," Jesus said unto him, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." So likewise Levi at the word of Christ "left all, rose up, and followed Him." (Compare Deut. 33:8, 9.) True that every believer is now a Nazarite, a Nazarite from his birth (the new birth); but it is not every believer who is a Nazarite according to Numbers 6 - one, that is, who in the energy of the Holy Spirit, is devoted, as Paul, for example, was, wholly and entirely to the Lord and His claims. To this privilege but few attain, even though it is proffered to many. If, however, we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our hearts.

2

Luke 23:31

The "green tree" in this scripture is Christ Himself, and the "dry" is the Jewish nation. Together with others, the women of Jerusalem followed Jesus on His way to Calvary, and, in the natural tenderness of their hearts they "bewailed and lamented Him." Jesus, turning, bade them weep rather for themselves and for their children, on account of the judgment that would soon fall upon

the unhappy and guilty city and people (vv. 29, 30), adding, "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" That is, if such things - wickedness, malice, hypocrisy, unrighteous judgment, and a degrading death - were visited upon Him who was like a green tree (compare Psalm 1:3; Jer. 17:7, 8), what should be done to the people who were as a dry tree, morally dead before God, without fruit or even leaves, and who were now committing their crowning sin in the rejection of their Messiah? For such a state, symbolized by a dry tree, there remained nothing but the ax and the fire. (Compare Matt. 3:10.)

Self-Occupation

"All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no." Deut. 8:1, 2.

It is at once refreshing, edifying and encouraging to look back over the whole course along which the faithful hand of our God has conducted us; to trace His wise and gracious dealings with us; to call to mind His many marvelous interpositions on our behalf, how He delivered us out of this strait and that difficulty; how, oftentimes, when we were at our wits' end, He appeared for our help, and opened the way before us, rebuking our fears and filling our hearts with songs of praise and thanksgiving.

We must not, by any means, confound this delightful exercise with the miserable habit of looking back at our ways, our attainments, our progress, our service, what we have been able to do, even though we are ready to admit, in a general way, that it was only by the grace of God that we were enabled to do any little work for Him. All this only ministers to self-complacency, which is destructive of all true spirituality of mind. Self-retrospection, if we may be allowed to use such a term, is quite as injurious in its moral effect as self-introspection. In short, self-occupation in any of its multiplied phases, is most pernicious; it is, in so far as it is allowed to operate, the deathblow to fellowship. Anything that tends to bring self before the mind must be judged and refused with stern decision; it brings in barrenness, darkness, and feebleness. For a person to sit down to look back at his attainments or his doings, is about as wretched an occupation as any one could engage in. We may be sure that it was not to any such thing as this that Moses exhorted the people when he charged them to "remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee."

We may here recur for a moment to the memorable words of the Apostle in Philippians 3. "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."

Now, the question is, What were the "things" of which the blessed Apostle spoke? Did he forget the precious dealings of God with his soul, throughout the whole of his wilderness journey? Impossible; indeed we have the very fullest and clearest evidence to the contrary. Hear his touching words before Agrippa: "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great" (Acts 26:22). So also, in writing to his beloved son and fellow laborer, Timothy, he reviews the past, and speaks of the persecutions and afflictions which he had endured; "But," he adds, "Out of them all the Lord delivered me" (2 Tim. 3:11). And again, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the

mouth of the lion." Chap. 4:16, 17.

To what then does the Apostle refer when he speaks of "forgetting those things which are behind"? We believe he refers to all those things which had no connection with Christ-things in which the heart might rest, and nature might glory-things which might act as weights and hindrances. All these were to be forgotten in the ardent pursuit of those grand and glorious realities which lay before him. We do not believe that Paul, or any other child of God or servant of Christ, could ever desire to forget a single scene or circumstance, in his whole earthly career, in any way illustrative of the goodness, the loving-kindness, the tender mercy, the faithfulness of God. On the contrary, we believe it will ever be one of our very sweetest exercises to dwell upon the blessed memory of all our Father's ways with us while passing across the desert, home to our everlasting rest.

"There with what joy reviewing
Past conflicts, dangers, fears,
Thy hand our foes subduing,
And drying all our tears;
Our hearts with rapture burning,
The path we shall retrace,
Where now our souls are learning
The riches of Thy grace."

But let us not be misunderstood. We do not by any means wish to give countenance to the habit of dwelling merely upon our own experience. This is often very poor work, and resolves itself into self-occupation. We have to guard against this as one of the many things which tend to lower our spiritual tone and draw our hearts away from Christ. But we need never be afraid of the result of dwelling upon the record of the Lord's dealings and ways with us. This is a blessed habit, tending ever to lift us out of ourselves, and fill us with praise and thanksgiving.

Why, we may ask, were Israel charged to "remember all the way" by which the Lord their God had led them? Assuredly, to draw out their hearts in praise for the past, and to strengthen their confidence in God for the future. Thus it must ever be.

"We'll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that's to come."

May we do so more and more! May we just move on, day by day, praising and trusting, trusting and praising. These are the two things which redound to the glory of God, and to our peace and joy in Him. When the eye rests on the "Ebenezers" which lie all along the way, the heart must give forth its sweet "Hallelujahs" to Him who has helped us hitherto, and will help us right on to the end. He hath delivered, and He doth deliver, and He will deliver. Blessed chain! Its every link is divine deliverance.

Nor is it merely upon the signal mercies and gracious deliverances of our Father's hand that we are to dwell with devout thankfulness, but also upon the humblings and provings of His wise, faithful, and holy love.

All these are full of richest blessing to our souls. They are not, as people sometimes call them, mercies in disguise, but plain, palpable, unmistakable mercies for which we shall have to praise our God throughout the golden ages of that bright eternity which lies before us.

"Thou shalt remember all the way"-every stage of the journey, every scene of wilderness life, all the dealings of God, from first to last, with the special object thereof, "to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart."

How wonderful to think of God's patient grace and painstaking love with His people in the wilderness! What precious instruction for us! With what intense interest and spiritual delight we can hang over the record of the divine dealings with Israel in all their desert wanderings! How much we can learn from the marvelous history! We too have to be humbled and proved, and made to know what is in our hearts. It is very profitable and morally wholesome.

On our first setting out to follow the Lord, we know but little of the depths of evil and folly in our hearts. Indeed, we are superficial in everything. It is as we get on in our practical career that we begin to prove the reality of things; we find out the depths of evil in ourselves, the utter hollowness and worthlessness of all that is in the world, and the urgent need of the most complete dependence upon the grace of God every moment. All this is very good; it makes us humble and self-distrusting; it delivers us from pride and self-sufficiency, and leads us to cling in childlike simplicity to the One who alone is able to keep us from falling. Thus, as we grow in self-knowledge, we get a deeper sense of grace, a more profound acquaintance with the wondrous love of the heart of God, His tenderness toward us, His marvelous patience in bearing with all our infirmities and failings, His rich mercy in having taken us up at all, His loving ministry to all our varied need, His numberless interpositions on our behalf, the exercises through which He has seen fit to lead us for our souls' deep and permanent profit.

The practical effect of all this is invaluable; it imparts depth, solidity, and mellowness to the character; it cures us of all our crude notions and vain theories; it delivers us from one-sidedness and wild extremes; it makes us tender, thoughtful, patient, and considerate toward others; it corrects our harsh judgments, and gives a gracious desire to put the best possible construction upon the acts of others, and a readiness to attribute the best motives in cases which may seem to us equivocal. These are precious fruits of wilderness experience which we may all earnestly covet.

Service

We have to learn that we are not agents to act for the Lord, so much as instruments by which He acts - pipes through which He waters. We must learn our nothingness in order that we may be simple, in no way occupied with ourselves, whether in success or failure. Our work is to deliver our message, and we are rewarded for doing our work - the success is not ours to control. When we learn our nothingness, that we are only the instruments which He takes up as and when He pleases, and for what He pleases, we shall be content to work on simply.

Seven Exhortations

Phil. 4:1-9

The first nine verses of the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Philippians bring before us the seven closing exhortations of the epistle. These exhortations were never more important and comforting than in these last difficult days.

The day of grace draws to its close. Evils within and without oppose us. To meet these different trials we have the encouragement of these seven exhortations, which, if taken to heart and carried out, will lift us above the sorrows of the way and guide us through every trial.

1) "Stand fast in the Lord" (v. 1). This great exhortation brings before us our resource in the presence of every kind of opposition. When the Apostle gave us this word, he himself was in bonds -the prisoner of the Lord. Within the Christian circle he was opposed by jealous men who were even preaching Christ out of envy, strife, and contention, seeking to arouse tribulation for him (chap. 1:15, 16). Outside it adversaries were plotting for his life (chap. 1:28).

Nevertheless, he is not cast down or overcome by one or the other. Do professors seek to add to his afflictions by preaching out of envy? Then, at least, he can rejoice that Christ is preached. Do adversaries seek his life? He is not terrified.

What then sustained him, and enabled him to stand unshaken in the presence of every opposition? It was this - his confidence was entirely in the Lord - in a word, he stood fast in the Lord. And having experienced the sustaining grace and support of the Lord, he passes on the exhortation to the saints of all ages. In the presence of every opposition we may have to meet, he says, "Stand fast in the Lord."

The adversaries without, and the "envy," "strife," and "contention" within the Christian circle, that existed even in the Apostle's day, have increased on every hand in our day. Yet we have this comforting exhortation, "Stand fast in the Lord."

We are neither exhorted nor expected to stand fast in our own strength or knowledge or wisdom. We are to stand fast against every effort of the enemy to further break up and divide the people of God, whether from within or without, by standing fast in the strength of the Lord, the living Lord who is exalted above every name, and is "able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (chap. 2:9; 3:21).

"Be of the same mind in the Lord." (v. 2). Nothing is more distressing to the heart and enfeebling to testimony than the differences of judgment that exist among the true people of God. In the second chapter of the epistle the Apostle traces all envy and strife to this one root - "vainglory" (chap. 2:3). Even in the very presence of the Lord there was a strife among the apostles, because each wanted to be accounted the greatest (Luke 22:24). So in the Apostle's day there was strife as the result of the vainglory of some who wanted to be great. And in our day, all the division and strife that has come in among the people of God can be traced to this one root - someone wanted to be

great.

The vainglorious man will ever be an envious man - jealous of every one that is more spiritual or more gifted than himself. And jealousy expresses itself in malice, and malice ends in strife (Jas. 3:14-16).

How then can we "be of the same mind in the Lord"? The Apostle clearly shows that this can only be as we are marked by "lowliness of mind," and to have the lowly mind, he says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." His was the lowly mind that led Him to make Himself of no reputation in order to serve others in love. Self likes to be served, and thinks it is exalted when being served by others; but love delights to serve.

If then we each forget self, refuse to seek a reputation for ourselves, and seek only to serve others in love, according to the lowly mind of Christ, we shall have the mind of the Lord, and "be of the same mind in the Lord."

"Rejoice in the Lord always" (v. 4). The Apostle has been telling us that within the Christian circle there are some marked by envy, strife, and contention (chap. 1); that all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's (chap. 2); and that many walk in such a way that they are enemies of the cross of Christ (chap. 3). Alas! these things are still found among the people of God, and may well call forth sorrow and tears, even as they did with him.

But the Apostle tells us more; he not only looks abroad and sees the failure of the saints, but he looks up and sees the glory of Jesus. He sees Christ in the glory, the prize of the calling on high (chap. 3:14). He sees that God has called us to be with Christ and like Christ in glory, and he sees the blessed end of the wilderness journey with all its sorrows and failure. With this glorious end in view, he forgets the things that are behind and presses on to the goal.

Moreover, he not only looks up to Christ in the glory, but he looks for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to change our bodies of humiliation into bodies of glory. Looking around he may weep; but looking up and looking on, he rejoices, and exhorts us to "Rejoice in the Lord always."

We cannot rejoice in ourselves, our service, or our walk; we cannot always rejoice in our circumstances or in the saints. But with the living Christ on high, and the coming Christ before us, we can "Rejoice in the Lord always."

4) "Let your gentleness be known of all men. The Lord is near" (vv. 5, 6; J.N.D. Trans.). It is only as we walk with the Lord before us, according to the first three exhortations, that we shall be able to carry out this exhortation which sets before us the character of gentleness by which we should be known of all men. Too often we are known for our self-assertiveness, for our strong opinions, and perhaps violence of expression, in relation to the affairs of this world. If our minds are set on things above, we shall not be eager to assert ourselves in regard to things on earth. As to these matters we do well to yield to others and be reticent of asserting our opinions. Thus we shall wear the beautiful character of Christ who was marked by "meekness and gentleness" (2 Cor. 10:1). We are to beware of being drawn into strife with those who may oppose, for "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men" (2 Tim. 2:24). Let us remember it is more important to exhibit the character of Christ than to assert our opinions, even if right, or to defend ourselves. Men can oppose our opinions, our assertions, and our violence; but who can stand against

gentleness? As one has said, "Gentleness is irresistible."

Moreover, to encourage us to gentleness, the Apostle reminds us that "The Lord is near." There is no need for us to assert ourselves and seek to put the world right, for the coming of the Lord is near; and at His coming He will right every wrong.

May we not also say that in another sense the Lord is near to us, however little we may realize His presence. He hears and sees all that we say and do. How many a hard and violent word we may have uttered in unguarded moments, that would never have been said had we realized His presence.

The disciples in their hardness rebuked the mothers who brought their little ones to Jesus. The Lord in His gentleness said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me." Again, the disciples in their resentment against villagers that refused to receive the Lord, would with violence bring down fire from heaven to destroy them. The Lord in His gentleness utters no word against His rejecters, but quietly passes on to another village.

May we then so speak and act while pursuing a separate path, so that if the world takes any account of us, it will only be to mark our "gentleness."

5) "Be careful for nothing" (v. 6). Here the Apostle's exhortation has in view the circumstances of life. He is not unmindful that in a world of sorrow and sickness, of want and care, there will be trials to face and burdens to be borne; but, he would not have us racking our poor hearts with them. He himself writes from a prison, and had suffered want, and a companion and fellow laborer had been sick nigh unto death; but in these sorrowful circumstances he had been lifted above all anxious care, and therefore can say to others, "Be careful for nothing."

We may have to face trials in our families, trials in our businesses, trials among the Lord's people; sorrows from sickness, sorrows from want, sorrows from the saints, that press upon us a great burden and, as one has said, "How often a burden possesses a person's mind, and when he tries in vain to cast it off, it comes back and worries him."

How then can he find relief? How is it possible to "Be careful for nothing"? Very blessedly the Apostle unfolds the way to be free, not necessarily of the trial, but of the burden of the trial, so that it no longer weighs the spirit down with care and anxiety. He says, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Thus only shall we find relief. "In everything," whatever the trial may be, small or great, make it known to God in prayer, and tell God exactly what you wish; "Let your requests be made known unto God." The requests may not be for our good, they may not be according to the mind of God; they may even be foolish, but we are to make them known to God.

What will be the result? Will He answer the requests? Will He remove the trial? He may see that to answer the request or remove the trial would not be for our good. So far as the immediate trial is concerned, He will act in perfect wisdom for our good, according to His perfect love. But this God will do; He will relieve our hearts from the burden of the trial. If we pour out our hearts before Him, He will pour in His peace into our hearts - that peace of God which passes all understanding.

So Hannah found in the days of old when in her sore trial she would say, "I... have poured out my soul before the LORD." In result we read, "Her countenance was no more sad." And yet, at the

time, her circumstances were just the same. Afterward, indeed, the Lord changed her circumstances; but first He showed that He had the power to change Hannah. From grief of heart and bitterness of soul she was brought into great peace - the peace of God which passes all understanding - through making known her requests to God (1 Sam. 1:6-18).

6) "Think on these things" (v. 8). Rejoicing in the Lord, and set free from care, we shall be able peacefully to delight our souls in the things that are pure and praiseworthy. In a world far from God we are continually faced with evil. It is in us and around us; it presses upon us from every side.

At times we have to face it and deal with it in ourselves, or others; but, even so, to have to do with evil in any form is defiling and soiling to the mind. Alas! there is often with us a tendency to pry into evil, and to be over-busy in contending against it!

God would have us to find our delight in all that is true and noble and just and pure. The flesh in us is ever ready to listen to slander, and bad reports, and things that are vicious and blameworthy. But, says the Apostle, listen to the good report; and if there is anything virtuous and praiseworthy in your brother, "think on these things."

7) "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." v. 9.

The mind being set on things which are pure will prepare the way for a life that is according to God. Right thinking will lead to right doing. Having said of the things that are pure, "think on these things," the Apostle now says, "Those things, which ye have... seen in me, do."

It is not enough to have "learned" and "received" the truth through the Apostle's writings, or to have "heard" it from his lips and "seen" it in his life. What we have learned, and received, and heard, and seen, is to be translated into our lives. We are, as another apostle has said, to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (Jas. 1:22).

Then, says the Apostle, if our minds are set on things that are pure, and our lives are in accordance with the truth - if we "think" and "do" rightly - we shall find that not only the peace of God keeps our hearts, but that the God of peace will be with us.

In spite then of all the failure of the Church, and the trials by the way, how blessed the portion of those believers who

Stand fast in the Lord;

Have the same mind in the Lord;

Rejoice in the Lord;

Who are known of all men for their gentleness;

Who are careful for nothing;

Who have their minds set on things that are pure, and

Who, in practice, "do" the things they have learned and received.

Such will have their hearts governed by the peace of God, and will enjoy the support of the God of peace. In all these exhortations there is nothing that cannot be carried out by the simplest and youngest believer, in the power of the Holy Spirit. They demand no special gift; they require no great intellectual attainment. They form the very essence of practical Christian life, and are as applicable in these last difficult days as in the early days of freshness and power.

"Thus ever on through life we find, To trust, O Lord, is best;

Who serve Thee with a quiet mind, Find in Thy service rest.

Their outward troubles may not cease,

But this their joy will be-

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace

Whose mind is stayed on Thee."

Signs of the Times

In these days, when there is considerable talk about corruption and bribery in certain governmental positions, both in the United States and in other countries, and certain analogies are being made to the decadence of the old Roman Empire, it is well that we should keep our own bearings as Christians. We should not expect to see righteousness ruling today; that is reserved for the day of the Millennium. Neither should we look for high moral standards in government in a day when moral standards generally are being either lowered or shattered altogether. Governments, generally speaking, are neither better nor worse than the people governed, but rather reflect the moral condition of the nation or world.

Corruption in government is nothing new. Consider what it was in the blessed and favored kingdom of Judah and Benjamin. The words of Micah, who lived at the time of Isaiah, graphically describe the condition: "That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up." Mic. 7:3. It was not merely that they did evil, but did it with both hands, and that earnestly. The prince and the judge sought bribes; they asked for a reward. Then the great man was there to seek concessions; he was the one who could pay for special privilege and so accomplish his mischievous design. So after the judge and the prince had made known their price, and the great man his scheme, the prophet concludes, "So they wrap it up"; in other words, their dishonest deal was consummated.

Perhaps Scripture gives us a glimpse of dishonesty and bribery in the day of the Roman Empire. Felix the procurator or governor of Judea in the days of the emperors Claudia and Nero kept a known innocent man in jail for two years; and during that time he sent for him often to converse with him, even about faith in Christ, but all the while he was seeking a bribe to release the prisoner - the Apostle Paul. Then when he went out of office he left Paul in prison to curry a little favor with the Jews who had accused him before Nero. (See Acts 26.) Little did that man think that his dishonesty would be recorded, and read by many generations.

There is little doubt but that the Roman Empire - people and rulers alike - became very corrupt, and that its dissolution was hastened by disintegration from within more than from foes without. But as the light of the gospel spread, especially since the reformation, there was a cleaning up of many things, for people do not do everything in the light that they would do in the dark. Little as the unbeliever, yea, even the professed atheist may think, he is indebted to the light of Christianity for many benefits he enjoys. But as the true light of the gospel becomes obscured, and infidelity parades under the banner of modernism and liberalism, so the breakdown of public opinion and moral restraint is returning as sure as the flood tide follows the ebb tide.

It is to this time and to those conditions that 2 Timothy 3 refers: "This know also, that in the last days perilous [or, difficult] times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more [or, rather] than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." vv. 1-5. (This description of the last days differs but little from the state of things in the old heathen world [described in Romans 1], except that in the last days of this age they are combined with "a form of godliness.") It is not "wars and rumors of wars" but moral conditions that make for the difficult times of the last days. It is difficult for the Christian to go on his way in total separation from the spirit of the age; it meets him at many turns, but yet he is warned of these days that have come, and exhorted to go on faithfully even though he may suffer persecution (v. 12); and these blessed words ring out above all the scandal, corruption, and false profession - "But continue thou" (v. 14).

We are here neither to improve nor to reform the world; we are simply to pass through it as "strangers" (those away from home) and "pilgrims" (those on their way home), not being surprised or alarmed at what we see or hear, but waiting for that blessed moment, now so near at hand, when we shall hear our Savior's voice and be caught up to meet Him in the air. In our period of transit through the world we are to thank God for the governments, for they are ordained of Him (Rom. 13:1); we are to pray for those in authority, for this is according to His Word (1 Tim. 2:1-4) and we are to render due respect to the authorities (Rom. 13:7), knowing that they are the ministers of God to us for good (Rom. 13:4).

"Then let us, brethren, while on earth,

With foes and strangers mixed,

Be mindful of our heavenly birth,

Our thoughts on glory fixed.

"That we should glorify Him here,

Our Father's purpose is;

Whene'er the Savior shall appear,

He'll fully own us His."

Note - It is not our thought to occupy Christians with conditions, but rather with Christ and heavenly things. We do not attempt to evaluate all the thoughts of the day, nor to sift the charges and counter charges that are being hurled, but rather to encourage us all to press on to the goal without being distracted by the babble around.

Spiritual Growth

"Wherefore laying aside all malice... as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Such is the exhortation in 1 Pet. 2:1, 2. But before there can be any true growth, we must be brought into relationship with God as His children, and thus know Him as our Father. Without this, even though awakened through grace, we are sure to be found struggling in legal bondage.

By nature all are children of wrath and disobedience, estranged from God, sinners guilty and lost; but through faith in His beloved Son, we receive the forgiveness of sins, and pass from death unto life (John 5:24). "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). And whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Henceforth we are the children of God by faith, and the Spirit dwells in us, whereby we can address God as our Father (Rom. 8:15, 16; Gal. 4:6).

How deeply precious - a poor sinner reconciled to God, standing in grace, His own child by faith, looking up into the face of God and crying, "Father"! It is the first lisping, so to speak, of a true child of God. All distance and estrangement gone-brought right home to God, to know Him as Father, and to enjoy forever the Father's love and care. This blessed truth came from the lips of Jesus immediately after His resurrection. "Go," said He to Mary Magdalene, "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). Well may the beloved disciple John, who leaned upon the bosom of his Master, and knew what was dear to His heart, exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

And now, before we proceed further, let me ask the reader of these lines in all love, Are you a child of God? Do you know what it is to be at peace with God? Do you know Him as your Father? Many, through self-occupation or defective teaching, shrink from what they consider self-confidence, and do not like to be too sure. This is nothing less than Satan's device to rob God of His glory, and the believer of the knowledge of his proper portion and relationship. The enemy whispers that to be in doubt and uncertainty is true humility, whereas it is simply the pride of our fallen natural heart. It is true humility to thankfully take God at His word, and joyfully confess the relationship and place of privilege into which His grace introduces all His own.

In the very epistle from which we quote the verses at the head of this paper, the Apostle addresses the people of God as "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," etc. (1 Pet. 1:2.) And again, "If ye call on the Father," etc. (1 Pet. 1:17.) So that Paul, John, and Peter alike bring before us the blessed truth, that God is the Father of Christians, and that He would have His children know and enjoy their relationship.

Now, as every earthly father desires that his children should grow from babyhood to manhood, so also is it the desire of God the Father that His children should grow spiritually. But if a child is to grow healthy and strong, he needs three things-good food, light, and air. And if a Christian would

grow in soul, he requires the same; that is, he needs to feed upon the Word of God, to depend upon the Spirit of truth to give him light and understanding, and to keep himself separate from the world, whose evil atmosphere when imbibed always checks growth.

Nothing but the Word is true food to the soul. Why is it that many make but little progress in divine things? Because only too often they are feeding on all kinds of light literature, instead of delighting in the Scriptures. Oh, that there may be an increased desire in all who read these lines to drink in more of the pure mental milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby! There is nothing so sweet, nothing so satisfying; and the spiritual appetite increases instead of diminishes as we feed thereon. Our capacity grows. We find out too our ignorance, and desire to know more of the One who is revealed in the precious pages of truth.

But in reading the Word, it is all-important that we should be found accompanying it with prayer, that the Spirit of truth may unfold its hidden treasures to our souls. He alone can teach us aright, and lead us to a deeper acquaintance with the mind of God.

And nothing is a greater hindrance to spiritual growth than tampering with the world. We are surrounded with it on all hands, and it has a very evil atmosphere. Satan is ever watchful to present his gilded baits in the most insidious ways. But "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Blessed be His name, we can never again be children of wrath when once we have become children of God; but it is very easy to fall into a cold, carnal condition. And with carnality, delight in the sincere milk of the Word departs, and the Spirit is grieved. A more miserable condition one can scarcely conceive than that of a carnal Christian. He is spoiled for this world, for an accusing conscience will not let him enjoy the pleasures of sin. He cannot indulge in its follies and vanities, though he may endeavor to put a good face on matters in the presence of man; but God, who knows the heart, knows all the misery that lies beneath. Of such how truly can it be said, "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." If the eye of a poor carnal wanderer from God should light upon this paper, may the tender love of an ever-gracious Father draw his poor heart back to Himself in true repentance, deep self-loathing, and confession of his sins. Surely then he shall know and enjoy again the light of God's countenance, and the joy of a Father's love.

And next we would invite our readers to turn to their Bibles, and to mark the three stages in the spiritual growth of the children of God, as brought before us in 1 John 2:12-18.

Now verse 12 is written to all Christians. The sins of all God's children are forgiven for Christ's name's sake. Next they are divided twice into three classes - fathers, young men, and little children (or babes). The fathers denote those who have grown up to full spiritual manhood; the young men, those who have made good progress in divine things, but are not yet full grown; the babes, those who have been recently brought to a knowledge of the truth.

The fathers have known Him that is from the beginning; that is, they know Christ from the beginning of His manifestation; their souls are grounded in the knowledge of that blessed One in the fullness and glory of His Person and work as unfolded in the Word of God. The same is repeated in verse 14, as this knowledge embraces the whole truth about Christ, and Christ is all.

The young men have overcome the wicked one. This is very blessed in a world overcome by the wicked one. It shows the mighty power of grace in the soul, separating the children of God from

that which is of the enemy. But in the second address it is added, "Because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." Weak and feeble at first, they have increased in strength, through reliance upon God and having His Word abiding in them. This is the one great source of strength. It is the Word of God that fortifies the soul against the attacks of the enemy. You may rely upon it, we shall be weak and powerless against his subtleties and attacks without it. But the Spirit of God adds a solemn warning to those who have only progressed so far as to be called young men, and who have not yet come to full growth, saying, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." We have not space in this paper to go into all the details of those verses, which form a subject in themselves; but it must suffice to put our readers on their guard. They are not out of danger yet. The world, and the things that are in it, are very ensnaring. The fathers are looked at as matured with such a knowledge of Christ, that they have learned the vanity of man's world. Blessed indeed for the soul when it is so. But, alas! how many who have run well for a time, and have progressed to a certain point, have been inveigled away from occupation with Christ through the lust of the flesh or of the eye, or through the pride of life, of which the world is formed. Take care!

And last, little children, or babes. They know not much of the Word of God, or the character of the world; but they know the Father. And in the freshness of the first love of Christ, and newborn sense of the Father's love, they so enjoy their newly found treasures, that instinctively they would shrink from that which is opposed. But in the second writing, the Apostle warns them that it is the last time, and puts them on their guard against the opposers of Christ.

Furthermore, in the families of men, we often meet with children who are suffering from various maladies. For instance, there are some who suffer from deafness; and in Heb. 5:11 the Apostle styles those whom he is addressing as dull of hearing, referring to the moral condition of their souls. Speaking of Christ, he says, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing," etc.

How many are found in this state at the present day! Always feeding upon the elementary truths of Christianity, without going on. He compares them to babes who have need of milk, and not of strong meat. They lack the spiritual capacity to grasp the fuller unfoldings of the truth; for "strong meat belongeth," he continues, "to them that are of full age" (or grown men), who by reason of habit have their senses exercised, so that they are enabled to distinguish good from evil - that which is of God, and that which is of Satan. May God in His grace keep us from dullness of hearing, and our ears open to the whole truth, so that it may sink into our hearts, and form our lives.

Again, there are other children who are short-sighted; and in 2 Pet. 1:5-9 we read: "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge," etc. "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." Now, nothing is easier than for a Christian to lack diligence, and fail to add the qualities here enumerated, which alone could make him a fruitful branch for God. And the consequence is short-sightedness, not total blindness; but they "cannot see afar off." The spiritually minded Christian is apt to wonder that some believers see so little. Here is the secret. A bad moral state clouds the spiritual vision. We are not to think for a moment that it means that one whose eyes have been opened to see beauty in Christ can ever have them closed again. No, it indicates a bad

state of soul, through the lack of obedience to the exhortation; a condemning conscience in consequence, and hence seeing nothing clear. So dark indeed do some get, that one raises the question whether they ever really had their eyes opened; but "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19).

And again, we often meet with lame children. And sad to say, lameness of walk and conduct is a very prevalent malady among the children of God. In Heb. 12:13 we read, "And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." Lameness is manifest to all, and the world soon detects a lame Christian. It takes many forms - crooked words, crooked walk, crooked ways. How sad to find the name of Christ reproached through the lame walk of those who profess it! May we all be found taking earnest heed to the exhortations of Christ and His apostles, that we may walk evenly for His glory through this world.

Jesus said, "Follow thou Me" (John 21:22).

Peter said, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21).

John said, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." 1 John 2:6.

May every beloved child of God, who knows these things, be preserved from deafness, blindness, and lameness, and "be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Col. 1:9, 10.

Spiritual Propriety: Understanding of the Times

There is such a thing as divine propriety, and the action that would suit one time will not do for another. We must know that time, and let our action be in harmony with what the Lord is either doing or permitting if we are to observe the suited proprieties of the situation.

When King David was in his palace at Jerusalem, the proper thing for young Mephibosheth to do was to have his feet nicely dressed, his beard properly trimmed, his clothes cleanly washed, and be sitting in his privileged place at David's royal table, eating bread there continually as one of the king's sons; but when David was thrust forth from his kingdom by the rebellion of his unnatural son Absalom, and was an exile from Jerusalem, the suited thing for Mephibosheth, who had tasted of the royal grace of David, and had been living in his palace, was to go into mourning, and sit apart from those who had cast him out, and had usurped his throne and kingdom; and this was just what he did. He could not accompany him in his flight because of his lameness, or perhaps because of Ziba's perfidy; but we read this of him (2 Sam. 19:24) when the king returned, that he came to meet him "and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace." He observed the conduct suited to the sorrowful character of the time. He went into a state of self-imposed mourning until the king returned; for he it was who had won and kept his heart all through the time of his rejection and exile.

This too is the suited conduct for us who are in the place of our Lord's rejection. They have crucified and slain Him, and God has raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand. And Jesus said, "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.... Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." John 16:20, 22. If this had its immediate fulfillment in the case of His eleven disciples, the principle of it holds good for the saints of the assembly who still stand in the place of their Lord's rejection. We are waiting for God's "Son from heaven,... even Jesus"; and it is ours to wear the garments of mourning and be in the place of rejection with Him until He shall come again.

There is a spring of joy in the Holy Ghost opened so that we can be filled with all joy and peace in believing, and rejoice in the Lord always, and thus show the Christian enigma, "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Yet if we are to be in harmony with the sad and solemn circumstances in which we are placed as associates of the murdered Prince of Life whom they "slew and hanged on a tree," our place necessarily is that of lonely mourners until our Lord returns. As Mephibosheth had no place in Absalom's kingdom, so we have no place here below under "the god of this world." Our hopes and joys are all bound up with the coming back of the King, the advent of our long-exiled Savior and Lord. Are we, indeed, all sitting apart in the place of separation, or are we mixing with the world that rejected and crucified Him?

"We rejoice in hope" when we look heavenward, for the day of His coming draws nigh. The cry has gone forth: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Are we all truly rejoicing in

the anticipation of seeing Himself, and being like Him and with Him forever?

The Supreme Requisite

One thing stands preeminently above all others in our relation with God, and that is obedience. He attaches the utmost importance to His will alone being done, whether in heaven or on earth (Matt. 6:10). Implicit obedience on the part of His creatures is demanded, and never will He allow His supreme will to be resisted with impunity (Rom. 9:19). Pharaoh found this out to his complete destruction. Why have the Jews, the ancient chosen people, been so severely chastened? Simply, they persisted in refusing to obey the voice of the Lord. Of that nation we have His pathetic lament: "O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river" (Isa. 48:18). To know and do the will of God is what He requires of us. We must therefore read His Word daily, meditatively, consecutively, prayerfully, and according to the four key words of Deuteronomy-hear, remember, keep, do.

So important is it to learn to obey, that God begins with the child, giving it the only commandment with promise, that it might be well with the child and its days lengthened. And the father is told to bring up his child "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:1-4). If the child does not learn to obey the parents when it is young, how will it obey God in after life? Young believers are exhorted to submit themselves unto the elder, obeying them that are the guides of the assembly (1 Pet. 5:5; Heb. 13:17); yea, all of us are enjoined to be subject one to another; and this subjection is likewise to be rendered to those who are in authority, to the king and all rulers (1 Pet. 2:13-17).

The spirit of lawlessness is spreading everywhere-in the home, in the Church, in the world-preparing the way for the lawless one whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). In contradistinction, let us seek grace that it may truthfully be said of both reader and writer, "Your obedience is come abroad unto all men" (Rom. 16:19).

Testimony in Life and Speech

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. 5:16.

"And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." Acts 14:1.

Oh! how this little word "so shine" should echo in our hearts. Once we were darkness, but now we are light in the Lord, and so the Lord says to us, "Walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). May the fruit of the light be seen in us as the blessed traits of our Lord and Savior are produced in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Have we not desired that we might "so speak" that some might believe? It is interesting to notice Acts 14:3 in connection with the speaking in Iconium: "A considerable time therefore they stayed, speaking boldly in reliance on the Lord, that gave witness unto the word of His grace." (W. Kelly Trans.) Here is a thought we ever need to have before us if we desire to so speak that souls may be blessed - it must be in reliance on the Lord. Dependence is that which should mark us, and in this connection it is interesting and profitable that we should think of the perfect Servant - the Lord Jesus - here in this world. Even His enemies had to confess that "never man spake like this man"; literally, "never man so spake as this man." Oh, how true this was! In Him the weary found rest, for He knew how to speak a word in season to such.

In Isa. 50 we are told the way the perfect Servant lived. "The Lord GOD hath given Me the tongue of the learned [learner or disciple, as chapter 8:16], that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned [learner]." It is wonderful to think' of the dependence of the Lord Jesus as man here in this world. He spent whole nights in prayer to God. What an example He gives us! May we know more of what this dependence is. May we be found feeding upon His Word morning by morning, that we may know how to speak.

To Him That Overcometh

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Rev. 2:17.

The "white stone" seems to mark the individual approbation of Christ; the "new name" peculiar intercourse between Christ and the individual, different from that which all share alike, different from the public joy. There is a public joy. All saints together will enjoy the comforts of Christ's love, will enter into the "joy of their Lord," and with one heart and one voice will sound His praise. There will also be joy in seeing the fruit of our labors, as it is said, "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?" 1 Thess. 2:19.

And again there will be another joy in seeing the company of the redeemed, all according to Christ's heart in holiness and glory. But besides this public joy, there will be Christ's peculiar private individual recognition and approval - the "white stone," and the "new name which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it."

Christ speaks elsewhere of His own new name as Head of the new creation. There are old names belonging to the Lord Jesus, but His new name is connected with that into which His Father brings Him, when all things which have failed in the hands of man, will be established and developed in Him; and having thus Himself a new name, He gives us also a promise of a new name. We are not only to know Jesus, and be known of Him according to present circumstances, but to have a special knowledge of Him in glory, according to the glory.

Our souls must value this personal approval of Christ, as well as think of the public approval. The latter will be great blessedness; but there is no peculiar affection in it, nothing that stamps peculiar love on the individual. Glory will be common to all, but glory is not affection.

This "new name" is a different thing; it is the proof of Christ's value for a person who had been faithful in difficult and trying circumstances, for one who has acted on the knowledge of His mind, and overcome through communion with Him. This will be met by special individual approbation. There is the public joy and approval in various ways, and the manifestation of our being loved by the Father as Jesus is loved. But this is not all that is given for our encouragement in individual conduct through trial, failure, and difficulty; there is also this special private joy of love.

When the common course of the Church is not straight, not in the full energy of the Holy Spirit, there is danger of disorder. We find that the Lord then applies Himself more to the walk of individual saints, and suits His promises to the peculiar state in which they are. What faith has to do in such circumstances, is to lay hold intelligently, soberly, and solemnly on the Lord's mind, and to walk according to it, strengthened by the promises which He has attached to such a path as He can own.

This at once refers the heart and conscience to Jesus, while full encouragement to the feeblest saint. And it is very precious to have thus the guidance of the Lord, and the promise of His own

peculiar approbation, so peculiar, that it is known only to him who receives it, when the course of the Church is such that one is thrown greatly on individual responsibility of conduct. But then, while it gives us strength for walk, it puts the soul in direct responsibility to the Lord, and breaks down human will.

When the professing church has become mingled with the world, "eating and drinking with the drunken," those who seek to be faithful must often have to walk alone, incurring the charge of folly and self will (and that too, even from their brethren), because they refuse to 'follow the beaten path.

Our only safety is in having the soul brought under the sense of direct responsibility

to the Lord by such warnings and promises as these, which both guide and supply strength to stand free from all around, while the consciousness that Christ marks and owns our ways, will sanctify as well as encourage our hearts. For it must be joy to anyone who loves the Lord Jesus, to think of having His individual peculiar approbation and love, to find that He has approved of our conduct in certain circumstances, though none know this but ourselves who receive the approval.

But, beloved, are we really content to have an approval which Christ only knows? Let us try ourselves a little. Are we not too desirous of man's commendation of our conduct? or, at least, that he should know and give us credit for the motives which actuate it? Are we content, so long as good is done, that nobody should know anything about us - even in the Church to be thought nothing of - that Christ alone should give us the "white stone" of His approval, and the "new name which no man knoweth save only he that receiveth it"? Are we content, I say, to seek nothing else? Oh, think what the terrible evil and treachery of that heart must be that is not satisfied with Christ's special favor, but seeks honor (as we do) one of another instead!

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

Oh, to See Him

It is wonderful to consider that the first object which met the opened eyes of Bartimaeus was the Savior, the very One who had performed the great miracle. As the sinner's eyes are opened, by faith he too sees the Savior. And some day all of His own will see Him. John tells us, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." On the last page of the Bible we read of the redeemed, "And they shall see His face."

Two Reactions

Just as there are multiplied thousands who would give their very lives in support of the Bible's teachings, so there are others who would pay any price to see it discredited and destroyed. This dual reaction reflects the Bible's supernatural qualities. No ordinary book would be so widely loved and hated at the same time.

Unsearchable Riches

We are constantly reminded of the inspired Apostle's words to his beloved Philippians, "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." The poor, restless, fickle, vagrant heart might long for some new theme; but the faithful Apostle Paul found his deep and unfailing delight in unfolding and dwelling upon those precious subjects which clustered in rich luxuriance around the Person and the cross of his adorable Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He had found in Christ all he needed for time and eternity. The glory of His Person had completely eclipsed all the glories of earth and of nature. He could say, "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.

This is the language of a true Christian, of one who had found a perfectly absorbing and commanding object in Christ. What could the world offer to such a one? What could it do for him? Did he want its riches, its honors, its distinctions, its pleasures? He counted them all as dung. How was this? Because he had found Christ. He had seen an object in Him which so riveted his heart that to win Him, and know more of Him, and be found in Him, was the one ruling desire of his soul. If any one had talked to Paul about something new, what would have been his answer? If any one had suggested to him the thought of getting on in the world, or of seeking to make money, what would have been his reply? Simply this, "I have found my all in Christ; I want no more. I have found in Him 'unsearchable riches' - 'durable riches and righteousness.' In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. What do I want of this world's riches, its wisdom, or its learning? These things all pass away like the vapors of the morning; and even while they last, are wholly inadequate to satisfy the desires and aspirations of an immortal spirit. Christ is an eternal Object, heaven's center, the delight of the heart of God; He shall satisfy me throughout the countless ages of that bright eternity which is before me; and surely if He can satisfy me forever, He can satisfy me now. Shall I turn to the wretched rubbish of this world, its pursuits, its pleasures, its amusements, its theaters, its concerts, its riches or its honors to supplement my portion in Christ? God forbid! All such things would be simply an intolerable nuisance to me. Christ is my all, and in all, now and forever!"

Such, we may well believe, would have been the distinctly pronounced reply of the blessed Apostle; such was the distinct reply of his whole life; and such, beloved Christian reader, should be ours also. How truly deplorable, how deeply humbling, to find a Christian turning to the world for enjoyment, recreation, or pastime! It simply proves that he has not found a satisfying portion in Christ. We may set it down as a fixed principle that the heart which is filled with Christ has no room for aught beside. It is not a question of the right or wrong of things; the heart does not want them, would not have them; it has found its present and everlasting portion and rest in the blessed One that fills the heart of God, and will fill the vast universe with the beams of His glory throughout the everlasting ages.

Waiting for the Son From Heaven: Signs of the Times

In the calculations of men, events unfold themselves as the effects of causes which are known to be operating. But while this has its truth, to faith it is God who in His supremacy holds a seal in His hand to stamp each day with its character or sign.

This gives the soul a fresh interest in the passing moments. Some of them may be more impressively stamped than others, but all are in progress, and each hour is contributing to the unfolding of the coming era, like the seasons of the year, or the advances of day and night. Some moments in such progresses may be more strongly marked than others, but all are in advance.

Every stage of Israel's journey through the desert was bringing them nearer to Canaan, though some stages were tame and ordinary, while others were full of incident. And so all the present age is accomplishing the advance of the promised kingdom, though some periods of it have greater importance than others.

These "signs of the times," or sealings of God's hand upon the passing hour, it is the duty of faith to discern, because they are always according to the premonitions of Scripture. Indeed, current events are only "signs" as they are according to or in fulfillment of such precious notices.

The words of the prophets made the doings of Jesus in the days of His flesh the signs of those days (Matt. 12:22, 23). And have we not words in the New Testament which in like manner make all around us at this moment, or in every century of the dispensation, significant? Have not words which we find there abundantly forecast the characters of such dispensation, and given beforehand the forms of those corruptions that were to work in Christendom? They have told us what now our eyes have seen. They told us of the field of wheat and tares; of the mustard seed which became a lodging place for the fowls of the air; of the unmerciful servant, or of the Gentile not continuing in God's goodness; of the great house with its vessels unto honor and dishonor; and of other like things. They told us of "the latter times," and of "the last days"; and they still tell us of the deadly character which that hour is to bear that is to usher forth "the man of sin," and ripen iniquity for the brightness and the power of the day of the Lord.

All this is so. And let me ask, If every hour is, after this manner, bearing its character or wearing its sign, what mark are we individually helping to put upon this our day? Is the purpose and way of the Lord, ripening into blessedness, at all reflected in us? Or are we in any measure aiding to unfold that form of evil which is to bring down the judgment? If the times were to be known and described according to our way, what character would they bear? What sign would distinguish them?

These are inquiries for the conscience of each of us. We cannot be neutral in this matter. We cannot be idle in this market place. It may be but in comparative feebleness, but still each of us within the range of the action of Christendom is either helping to disclose God's way or to ripen "the vine of the earth" for "the winepress of the wrath of God."

The Lord tells us that the sign on which our faith must rest is that of a humbled Christ, such a sign as that of Jonah the prophet. Our faith deals with such a sign because our need as sinners casts us on a Savior, or a humbled Christ. But hope may feed on a thousand signs. Our expectations are nourished by a sight of the operations of the divine hand displaying every hour the ripening of the divine counsels and promises, in spite of the world, and in the very face of increasing human energies. These signs may be watched, but watched by the saint already in the place and attitude assigned him by the Spirit. They are not to determine what is his place, but they may exercise him in it. His place and attitude are beforehand and independently determined for him, waiting for the Son of God from heaven.

This posture the Thessalonian saints assumed on their believing the gospel (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). The Apostle seems afterward to strengthen them in that posture by telling them that from it they were to be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17). And again afterward he seems to guard them against being disturbed in that attitude, against being tempted to give it up, by further telling them that the place of expectation should be exchanged for the place of meeting ere the day of the Lord fell in its terrors on the world and the wicked (2 Thess. 2:1).

And still further. This very posture of waiting for the Son from heaven had induced a certain evil. The Thessalonian saints were neglecting present handiworks. The Apostle does not in any wise seek to change their posture, but admonishes them to hold it in company with diligence and watchfulness, that while their eye was gazing their hand might be working (2 Thess. 3).

The Lord Himself seems to me to give just at the bright and blessed close of the sacred Volume admonitions and encouragements to strengthen us in this place and posture of heart.

"I come quickly" is announced by Him three times in Revelation 22 - words directly suited to keep the heart that listens to them believingly in the attitude of which I am speaking.

But different words of warning and encouragement accompany this voice.

"Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." v. 7. This warns us that while we are waiting for Him we must do so with watchful, obedient, observant minds, heedful of His words.

"Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." v. 12. This encourages to diligence, telling us that by the occupation of our talents now during His absence, on the promised and expected return, He will have honors to impart to us.

"Surely I come quickly," is again the word (v. 20). This is a simple promise. It is neither a warning nor an encouragement. Nothing accompanies the announcement as in the other cases. It is, as it were, simply a promise to bring Himself on His coming again. But it is the highest thing, the dearest thing. The heart may be silent before a warning, and before an encouragement. Such words may get their audience in secret from the conscience. But this promise of the simple personal return of Christ gets its answer from the saints. "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Great things are going on. The professing church, the Jew, and the Gentile are all in characteristic activity, each full of preparation and expectancy. But faith waits for that which comes not with such things. The rapture of the saints is part of a mystery, a part of "the hidden wisdom." The coming of

the Lord for His own is a fact, as I judge, apart altogether from the history or the condition of the world around.

We Walk by Faith, Not by Sight

We wish briefly to show the contrast between the path of Abram and the path of Lot, as furnished in the Book of Genesis, but chiefly for the help of young believers who are called to face the terribly increasing evil and alluring influences of these last difficult times.

When Abram was called to leave his country and his father's house and go into a land that God would show him, his nephew Lot went with him. Both became rich in flocks and herds; and when their respective herdmen strove at Bethel on account of the land being too small for them (allowed, no doubt, of the Lord to separate Abram from his relative), Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee.... If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." Gen. 13:8, 9. From this point, mark the course of each of these two noted saints of God. Abram walked by faith, while Lot walked by sight, but observe with what vastly different results. "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where.... Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan,... and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly." Soon afterward Lot dwelt in Sodom. Then came his first warning; namely, in the war of the nine kings he was taken captive from Sodom, with all he possessed, to Hobah, near Damascus, whence Abram had to rescue him. Did this warning voice cause Lot to alter his course for the better? No, it appears not, as he returned to Sodom and became more involved than ever; for we read that he sat as a magistrate in the gate of the city.

Then came his second warning, which was much more solemn than the first. One evening two angels arrived at his house to announce that as the iniquity of the city was so great they had come to destroy it by fire. It is evident how far Lot's heart was in Sodom from the fact that next morning, "while he lingered, the men [angels] laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city," and said, "Escape for thy life.... Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven." Gen. 19:16, 17, 24. How solemn! And it is most marked that so little is said afterward of Lot in God's Word. Solemn warning indeed for any who have an eye or a heart for this world that lies in the wicked one; that is, under the prince of the power of the air, even Satan, the god of this world - a world under the righteous judgment of a holy God on account of man's sin.

Lot's backsliding consisted of about four steps, and we are not aware that a soul ever reaches the full length all at once. He beheld, he chose, he pitched his tent, he dwelt in Sodom. Should a world-bordering believer read these lines, we lovingly warn you, dear one, beware of the first wrong step; and may the Lord indeed in His mercy keep each of us from entering upon the lines of sight. For the Lord said for our learning, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." As to things of sight it is written, "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Pet. 3:7.

It may perhaps be said by some, Then we must needs go out of the world altogether to comply with these requirements. We do not think Abram would have said so; Lot might. But the secret lies in the Lord's words, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Of course the only One who ever did walk the path of faith in all its perfection was the blessed Lord Himself, and He left "us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21).

When circumstances forced Abram and Lot to part company, how much wiser it would have been had Lot conferred with such an honored man of faith as Abram, instead of being allured by that well-watered plain, where he took his first three wrong steps!

When Lot had departed, the Lord said to Abram, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it.... Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD." Abram therefore got infinitely more by faith in God than Lot could ever possibly obtain by sight; "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fullness thereof." Psalm 24:1.

Abram had also four steps about the same time which are - he looked, he walked, he pitched his tent, he dwelt. But note, each step was in the path of faith, and in company with the Lord, which led to where he built an altar unto the Lord. The path of faith always leads Godward. Which of the two plains are you in, dear reader? Is it the plain of Jordan - well-watered it may be, but where your soul is lean and barren, and very likely out of your Lord's company? or are you in the plains of Mamre, with your soul increasing in fatness and in the true spirit of worship, having your altar unto the Lord? We read not of any such thing as an altar being built by Lot in Sodom. There is no altar with the world. The Lord says to His own, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate,... and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you."

It was apart from God that Lot went astray. His loss was enormous, but he did not cease to be a saint. We remember that the example of our blessed Lord is the only perfect one, for Abram had his failures as all saints have; but, beloved child of God, as all Scripture is written for our learning, we earnestly beseech you to let Abram's example, and not Lot's, be yours, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." 2 Cor. 5:7.

The Woman

The influence for good of a virtuous woman is beyond calculation. A modest woman is the greatest help and blessing to a man; whereas an indiscreet woman has quite the reverse effect. The training of each generation is more in the mother's hands than the father's; for she, naturally, has more to do with her offspring than her husband, though he is assigned the position of head of the house, filling the place of authority and rule. A virtuous Christian mother, living according to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, is the sweetest and most ennobling influence to be found on earth. Where homes are blessed with such, and where a nation's womanhood is truly womanly and modest, then we look for nothing else than the best results.

In the light of our Lord's prediction that the last days would resemble the times of Lot (Luke 17:28), we can expect to see the breakdown of all moral restrictions and good standards in society, with an awful retrograde movement among women generally. Debase them, move them out of the place God has assigned them, then look for the complete corruption of the whole earth and the inevitable righteous judgment of God.

Today things are tolerated which would have shocked everybody just a few short years ago.

"Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2) is a clear command from heaven; and, "women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety" (1 Tim. 2:9) is another charge just as plain.

The Word Made Flesh

"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. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:1-13.

There is one remark that furnishes a most important key to the Gospel of John, which is illustrated very simply and manifestly in this first chapter. The object of the Holy Ghost is to assert the personal glory of Jesus; and hence it is that there is not perhaps a single chapter in the New Testament that presents our Lord in so many different aspects, yet all personal, as this opening chapter of this Gospel. His divine glory is carefully guarded. He is said in the most distinct language to be God as to His nature, but withal a man. He is God no less than the Father is, or the Holy Ghost; but He is the Word in a way in which the Father and the Holy Ghost are not. It was Jesus Christ the Son of God who alone was the Word of God. He only after a personal sort expressed God. The Father and the Holy Ghost remained in their own unseeable majesty. The Word had for His place to express God clearly; and this belonged to Him, it is evident, as a distinctive personal glory. It was not merely that He was the Word when He came into the world, but "in the beginning was the Word" when there was no creature. Before anything came into being that was made, the Word was in the beginning with God -not merely in God, as if merged or lost in God, but He had a distinct personal subsistence before a creature existed. He "was in the beginning with God." This is of immense importance, and with these truths our Gospel opens.

Then we find His creation glory stated afterward. "All things were made by Him." There is nothing which more stamps God to be God than giving existence to that which had none, causing to exist by His own will and power. Now all things exist by the Word; and so emphatically true is this that the Spirit has added, "and without Him was not anything made that was made."

But there was that which belonged to the Lord Jesus that was not made - "In Him was life." It was not only that He could cause a life to exist that had not before existed, but there was a life that belonged to Him from all eternity. "In Him was life." Not that this life began to be; all else, all creation, began to be, and it was He that gave them the commencement of their existence.

But in Him was life, a life that was not created, a life that was therefore divine in its nature. It was the reality and the manifestation of this life which were of prime importance to man. Everything

else that had been since the beginning of the world was only a creature; but in Him was life. Man was destined to have the display of this life on earth. But it was in Him before He came among men. The life was not called the light of angels but of men. Nowhere do we find that eternal life is created. The angels are never said to have life in the Son of God. They are kept by divine power and holy. Theirs is a purely creature life, whereas it is a wonderful fact of revelation that we who believe have the eternal life that was in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and are therefore said to be partakers of the divine nature. This is in no way true of an angel. It is not that we for a moment cease to be creatures, but we have what is above the creature in Christ the Son of God.

And this "light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." It is striking to remark here the entire passing over of all the history of the world of which we are apt to make so much; yes, even of the dispensational dealings of God with men. All is passed by very briefly indeed - those ages that man thinks all but interminable, in which God gave being to the creature, and in which He may have changed over and over again the various forms of the creature, where science is endeavoring to pursue its uncertain and weary way. All this is closed up in the few words, "All things were made by Him." Scripture, and this chapter in particular, summarizes it with striking brevity. "All things were made by Him." The details of it were left completely aside. What was good for us to know, we are told in Genesis 1. There is nothing like that chapter, even in cosmogonies which borrowed from it. And all that man has thought or said or written about a system of the world is not to be named with it for depth or certainty, as well as for simplicity, in the smallest compass.

But there is a reason why all such matters vanish after two or three words. It is because the Lord Jesus, the Word of God, is the Object that the Holy Ghost is dwelling on. The moment that He is brought out, creation just pays Him homage, owning Him to be the Creator, and is then forthwith dismissed. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." It is enough to say that He created all. He remains in His own grace. Now we learn what is the Spirit's object in this. It was not to give us details of the creation; it was to acquaint us with Jesus as the light of men.

In what condition then did He find men? Were there not great differences among them, as was thought? There were some - most indeed - idolaters, yet wise and prudent, worshiping stocks and stones; and others who were not idolaters, but very zealous for the law as given by Moses. Not that a word is said yet about the law, nor about any differences, but that the Word of God was the light that manifested everybody; whether Jews or Gentiles, they were only darkness. It is not therefore only that the physical creation is passed by most curtly, but the moral world is closed with almost equal brevity. "The light shineth in darkness," and whatever the boasting of the Gentiles, and the law of the Jews (which was real as compared with the Gentiles), here all is measured and put out, as it were, by the true light, the Word of God. Jew or Gentile, they are but darkness, and the light shines in darkness, and spite of all its pretension and pride, the darkness comprehended it not. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." When the Holy Ghost is come down, things are also tested and convicted by Him; and He is brought forward by Paul somewhat as John here introduces the Son of God. It shows how poor all of man is in comparison with God, and how little he is capable of appreciating the truth in the Son or by the Spirit.

Then we find John brought in. The reason why he is singled out from all others I believe to be this - he was the immediate forerunner of the Lord Jesus. He would surely not have been named here if it were not so, because he was the moon that derived its light from the sun - from the Lord Jesus just about to come. His was only a derivative light, and he seems brought in here because of that peculiarity. Other prophets were too distant from Christ, but John was near enough to be an immediate precursor of the Messiah. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe." It is no question of law-testing or proving. All this was very important in its place; but the glory that the law had is completely eclipsed by a brighter glory. Scripture therefore takes pains to say John "was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light." He might be "a burning and a shining lamp" (as it ought to be in chapter 5), but he was only an earthly and derived light. "He was not that Light." "That was the true Light"; Jesus is the Light, the true

Light, which (as rightly rendered) on coming into the world lighteth every man. It is speaking of the effect of Christ's coming into the world. It is not every man that cometh into the world, but that when He comes into the world, He is the One that casts His light on everyone here below. There had been a time when, as it is said in the Acts, God winked at the ignorance of men; but now everything must appear in its own light, or rather darkness, because the true Light was come; and therefore when He comes into the world He lights every man there-all are brought out just as they are, and none can escape. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him"; and the awful result of this darkness was that "the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

The world was guilty enough; it was so dark that it did not even know Him. The Jews had abundance of truth by which they might know Him, but their will was still more set against the Son of God than even the poor Gentiles. "His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power [title or right] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." What a blessed place! and blessed to know that this is our place to which grace has entitled us now in His name! May we seek to make Him known to every creature with all our hearts in the measure of power the Lord has given us, honoring thus, and in every other way, the Lord Jesus whom the Holy Ghost loves to honor.

We have other glories of His brought out afterward. We hear of Him as the Son, the Lamb of God, the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, the King of Israel, and the Son of man. All these are successively unfolded to us in this chapter. Indeed it would be difficult to say what glory of our Lord is not presented here except that of priest, and of Head of the Church. John never gives us the priesthood of Jesus. He touches what is close on it when he speaks in his first epistle of advocacy with the Father; but the business of

John was to show His divine personal glory, yet as man on earth. Priest was what He was called to be in heaven; and as Head of the Church He is there also. But John shows us what He was in Himself as coming from heaven, and that He does not lose one whit of His glory by becoming a man. In His being Priest and Head of the Church, we see special glories which He received on going up to heaven, and these Paul develops fully. John's point is God and the Father manifested on earth in the Person of Jesus Christ His Son.

The Word of God in the Home

Deut. 6:6-9

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

All this is perfectly beautiful - the Word of God hidden in the heart, flowing out in loving instruction to the children, and in holy conversation in the bosom of the family; shining out in all the activities of daily life, so that all who came inside the gates or entered the house might see that the Word of God was the standard for each, for all, and in everything.

Thus it was to be with Israel of old; and surely thus it ought to be with Christians now. But is it so? Are our children thus taught? Is it our constant aim to present the Word of God, in all its heavenly attractiveness, to their young hearts? Do they see it shining out in our daily life? Do they see its influence upon our habits, our temper, our family intercourse, our business transactions? This is what we understand by binding the Word as a sign upon the hands, having it as a frontlet between the eyes, writing it upon the doorposts, and upon the gates.

Reader, is it thus with us? It is of little use attempting to teach our children the Word of God if our lives are not governed by that Word. We do not believe in making the blessed Word of God a mere school book for our children; to do so is to turn a delightful privilege into a wearisome drudgery. Our children should see that we live in the very atmosphere of Scripture; that it forms the material of our conversation when we sit in the bosom of the family, in our moments of relaxation.

Alas! how little is this the case! Have we not to be deeply humbled in the presence of God when we reflect upon the general character and tone of our conversation at table and in the family circle? How little there is of Deut. 6:7! How much of "foolish talking" and "jesting, which are not convenient"! How much idle gossip! How much worthless small talk!

And from what does all this proceed? Simply from the state of the heart. The Word of God, the commandments and sayings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, are not dwelling in our hearts; and hence they are not welling up and flowing out in living streams of grace and edification.

Will any one say that Christians do not need to consider these things? If so, let him ponder the following wholesome 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." Eph. 4:29. And again, "Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Chap. 5:18-20.

These words were addressed to the saints at Ephesus; and, most assuredly, we should apply our hearts diligently to them. We are little aware, perhaps, of how deeply and constantly we fail in maintaining the habit of spiritual conversation. It is specially in the bosom of the family, and in our ordinary intercourse, that this failure is most manifest. Hence our need of those words of exhortation which we have just penned. It is evident the Holy Spirit foresaw the need, and graciously anticipated it. Hear what He says "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse": "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Col. 3:15, 16.

Lovely picture of ordinary Christian life! It is but a fuller and higher development of what we have brought before us in these three verses in Deuteronomy 6, where the Israelite is seen in the midst of his family, with the Word of God flowing forth from his heart in loving instruction to his children-seen in his daily life in all his intercourse at home and abroad, under the hallowed influence of Jehovah's words.

Beloved Christian reader, do we not long to see more of all this in our midst? Is it not, at times, very sorrowful and very humbling to mark the style of conversation that obtains in the midst of our family circles? Should we not sometimes blush if we could see our conversation reproduced in print? What is

the remedy? Here it is - a heart filled with the peace of Christ, the word of Christ, Christ Himself. Nothing else will do. We must begin with the heart, and where that is thoroughly preoccupied with heavenly things, we shall make very short work with all attempts at evil speaking, foolish talking, and jesting.

The Word of the Lord

"And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live." Deut. 8:3.

This passage derives special interest and importance from the fact that it is the first of our Lord's quotations from the book of Deuteronomy, in His conflict with the adversary in the wilderness. Let us ponder this deeply. It demands our earnest attention. Why did our Lord quote from Deuteronomy? Because that was the book which, above all others, specially applied to the condition of Israel, at the moment. Israel had utterly failed; and this weighty fact is assumed in the book of Deuteronomy, from beginning to end. But notwithstanding the failure of the nation, the path of obedience lay open to every faithful Israelite. It was the privilege and duty of every one who loved God, to abide by His Word, under all circumstances and in all places.

Now, our blessed Lord was divinely true to the position of the Israel of God; Israel after the flesh had failed and forfeited everything; He was there in the wilderness as the true Israel of God, to meet the enemy by the simple authority of the Word of God. "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward hungered. And the devil said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." Luke 4:1-4.

Here then is something for us to ponder. The perfect Man, the true Israel, in the wilderness, surrounded by the wild beasts, fasting for forty days, in the presence of the great adversary of God, of man, of Israel. There was not a single feature in the scene to speak for God. It was not with the second Man as it was with the first; He was not surrounded with all the delights of Eden, but with all the dreariness and desolation of a desert - there in loneliness and hunger, but there for God!

Yes, blessed be His name, and there for man; there to show man how to meet the enemy in all his varied temptations; there to show man how to live. We must not suppose for a moment that our adorable Lord met the adversary as God over all. True, He was God, but if it were only as such that He stood in the conflict, it could not afford any example for us. Besides, it would be needless to tell us that God was able to vanquish and put to flight a creature which His own hand had formed. But to see One who was in every respect a man, and in all the circumstances of humanity, sin excepted - to see Him there in weakness, in hunger, standing amid the consequences of man's fall, and to find Him triumphing completely over the terrible foe - it is this which is so full of comfort, consolation, strength, and encouragement for us.

And how did He triumph? This is the grand and all-important question for us, a question demanding the most profound attention of every member of the Church of God, a question the magnitude and importance of which it would be utterly impossible to overstate. How then did the Man Christ Jesus vanquish Satan in the wilderness? Simply by the Word of God. He overcame not as the Almighty God, but as the humble, dependent, self-emptied, and obedient Man. We have before us the magnificent spectacle of a man, standing in the presence of the devil, and utterly confounding him with no other weapon whatsoever save the Word of God. It was not by the display of divine power, for that could be no model for us; it was simply with the Word of God in His heart and in His mouth, that the second Man confounded the terrible enemy of God and man.

And let us carefully note that our blessed Lord does not reason with Satan. He does not appeal to any facts connected with Himself-facts with which the enemy was well acquainted. He does not say, "I know I am the Son of God; the opened heavens, the descending Spirit, the Father's voice, have all borne witness to the fact of My being the Son of God." No; this would not do; it would not and could not be an example for us. The one special point for us to seize and learn from is that our Great Exemplar, when meeting all the temptations of the enemy, used only the weapon which we have in our possession; namely, the simple, precious, written, Word of God.

We say, "all the temptations," because in all the three instances our Lord's unvarying reply is, "It is written." He does not say, "I know," "I think," "I feel," "I believe" this, that, or the other; He simply appeals to the written Word of God-the book of Deuteronomy in particular-that very book which infidels have dared to insult, but which is preeminently the book for every obedient man, in the face of total, universal, hopeless wreck and ruin.

This is of unspeakable moment for us, beloved reader. It is as though our Lord Christ had said to the adversary, "Whether I am the Son of God or not, is not now the question, but how man is to live; and the answer to this question is only to be found in Holy Scripture; and it is to be found there as clear as a sunbeam, quite irrespective of all questions respecting Me. Whoever I am, the Scripture is the same; 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'"

Here we have the only true, the only safe, the only happy attitude for man; namely, hanging in earnest dependence upon "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD." Blessed attitude! we may well say; there is nothing like it in all this world. It brings the soul into direct, living, personal contact with the Lord Himself, by means of His Word. It makes the Word so absolutely essential to us in everything, we cannot do without it. As the natural life is sustained by bread, so the spiritual life is sustained by the Word of God. It is not merely going to the Bible to find doctrines there, or to have our opinions or views confirmed; it is very much more than this; it is going to the Bible for the staple commodity of life-the life of the new man. It is going there for food, for light, for guidance, for comfort, for authority, for strength, for all, in short, that the soul can possibly need, from first to last.

And let us specially note the force and value of the expression, "every word." How fully it shows that we cannot afford to dispense with a single word that has proceeded out of the mouth of the Lord. We want it all. We cannot tell the moment in which some exigence may present itself for which Scripture has already provided. We may not, perhaps, have specially noticed the scripture before, but when the difficulty arises, if we are in a right condition of soul, the true posture of heart, the Spirit of God will furnish us with the needed scripture; and we shall see a force, beauty, depth,

and moral adaptation in the passage which we had never seen before. Scripture is a divine and therefore exhaustless treasury in which God has made ample provision for all the need of His people, and for each believer in particular, right on to the end. Hence we should study it all, ponder it, dig deeply into it, and have it treasured up in our hearts, ready for use when the demand arises.

There is not a single crisis occurring in the entire history of the Church of God, not a single difficulty in the entire path of any individual believer, from beginning to end, which has not been perfectly provided for in the Bible. We have all we want in that blessed volume; and hence we should be ever seeking to make ourselves more and more acquainted with what that volume contains, so as to be "thoroughly furnished" for whatever may arise, whether it be a temptation of the devil, an allurements of the world, or a lust of the flesh; or, on the other hand, for equipment for that path of good works which God has afore prepared that we should walk in it.

And we should further give special attention to the expression, "out of the mouth of the LORD." This is unspeakably precious. It brings the Lord so very near to us, and gives us such a sense of the reality of feeding upon His every word, yea, of hanging upon it as something absolutely essential and indispensable. It sets forth the blessed fact that our souls can no more exist without the Word than our bodies could without food. In a word, we are taught by this passage that man's true position, his proper attitude, his only place of strength, safety, rest, and blessing is to be found in habitual dependence upon the Word of God.

This is the life of faith which we are called to live-the life of dependence-the life of obedience-the life that Jesus lived perfectly. That blessed One could not move a step, utter a word, or do a single thing save by the authority of the Word of God. No doubt He could have turned the stone into bread, but He had no command from God to do that; and inasmuch as He had no command, He had no motive for action. Hence Satan's temptations were perfectly powerless. He could do nothing with a Man who would only act on the authority of the Word of God.

And we may also note, with very much interest and profit, that our blessed Lord does not quote Scripture for the purpose of silencing the adversary, but simply as authority for His position and conduct. Here is where we are apt to fail; we do not sufficiently use the precious Word of God in this way; we quote it, at times, more for victory over the enemy than for power and authority for our own souls. Thus it loses its power in our hearts. We want to use the Word as a hungry man uses bread, or a mariner uses his chart and his compass; it is that on which we live and by which we move and act, and think and speak. Such it really is, and the more fully we prove it to be all this to us, the more we shall know of its infinite preciousness. Who is it that knows most of the real value of bread? Is it a chemist? No, but a hungry man. A chemist may analyze it and discuss its component parts, but a hungry man proves its worth. Who knows most of the real value of a chart? Is it the teacher of navigation? No, but the mariner as he sails along an unknown and dangerous coast.

These are but feeble figures to illustrate what the Word of God is to the true Christian. He cannot do without it. It is absolutely indispensable in every relationship of life, and in every sphere of action. His hidden life is fed and sustained by it; his practical life is guided by it; in all the scenes and circumstances of his personal and domestic history, in the privacy of his closet, in the bosom of his family, in the management of his affairs, he is cast upon the Word of God for guidance and counsel.

And it never fails those who simply cleave to it and confide in it. We may trust Scripture without a single shade of misgiving. Go to it when we will, we shall always find what we want. Are we in sorrow? Is the poor heart bereaved, crushed, and desolate? What can soothe and comfort us like the balmy words which the Holy Spirit has penned for us? One sentence of Holy Scripture can do more, in the way of comfort and consolation, than all the letters of condolence that ever were penned by human hand. Are we discouraged, fainthearted, and cast down? The Word of God meets us with its bright and soul-stirring assurances. Are we pressed by pinching poverty? The Holy Ghost brings home to our hearts some golden promise from the page of inspiration, recalling us to Him who is "possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen. 14:19), and who, in His infinite grace, has pledged Himself to "supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:19. Are we perplexed and harassed by the conflicting opinions of men, by the dogmas of conflicting schools of divinity, by religious and theological difficulties? A few sentences of Holy Scripture will pour in a flood of divine light upon the heart and conscience, and set us at perfect rest, answering every question, solving every difficulty, removing every doubt, chasing away every cloud, giving us to know the mind of God, putting an end to conflicting opinions by the one divinely competent authority.

What a boon, therefore, is Holy Scripture! What a precious treasure we possess in the Word of God! How we should bless His holy name for having given it to us! Yes; and bless Him too for everything that tends to make us more fully acquainted with the depth, fullness, and power of those words of our chapter, "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live." Truly precious are these words to the heart of the believer!

Worldiness

Worldiness, so rampant, calls for renewed separation from all that is not according to the Word of God. Departure from the plain paths of Scripture is on the increase, and we are in danger of being overcome by the plausible reasons and fair speeches of those who advocate toleration of that from which God in His grace has delivered us.

When the heart gets cold, and self-interests are allowed, then there is a tendency to make little of real separation from those things which God has forbidden.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." 2 Cor. 6:17.

The Year of Jubilee: the Time of Godly Order Upon Earth

Lev. 25:8-16

Someone has truly remarked that the institution of the jubilee had a double testimony. It testified of man's confusion and it testified of God's order. During forty-nine years many things were suffered to get into disorder under the hand of man: One man got into poverty, another into debt, another into bondage, another into exile. Again, one man through extravagance had let his inheritance slip through his hands; another, by his shrewdness or penuriousness, had added to his.

Thus it happened during man's day. But the trumpet of jubilee changed, in a moment, the entire condition of things. No sooner had that hallowed sound fallen on the ear than the debtor was released, the slave emancipated, and the exile brought back. The jubilee was God's year, and He would have no debtors, no slaves, no exiles. All should be free and happy, and all abundantly supplied throughout Jehovah's year. When the Lord alone is exalted, all must be right.

Now it is interesting and very practical to note the various ways in which men would be affected by the approach of the year of jubilee. The man who had lost his property would be glad because he would get it back. The man who had gained property would be sorry because he would lose it. But the man who had done neither, who had neither lost nor gained, the right-minded Israelite who had retained his patrimony, and was satisfied therewith, this man would regard the jubilee not with reference to his gains or losses, but simply as a noble testimony to God's order, and as securing the blessing of the entire nation.

Thus it was with the Jew in reference to the jubilee; and thus it should be with the Christian in reference to the glorious appearing of the Son of God from heaven. We should simply look forward to that blessed event as the moment of Christ's exaltation, the moment of His full investiture with the kingdoms of this world, the moment in which an end shall be put to all man's misrule and confusion, and the order of God be established for evermore. Blessed, longed-for moment!

And be it noted here that the cross of Christ is at once the remedy for all man's confusion, and the basis of God's order. This is strikingly brought out in the ordinance of the jubilee. "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land" (see Lev. 16). The trumpet of jubilee and the day of atonement were inseparably linked together. The blood of the cross is the foundation of everything. In the times of the restitution of all things the river of life will proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1).

Zechariah 13:6-9

The following verse tells of Christ's rejection: "And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in Thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends." v. 6. He had in love become the servant of man; and for His love He had hatred, rejection, and crucifixion, and this, as He explains, in the house of His friends. For, according to the flesh, He was a Jew, Son of David, heir of the promises, and as such He came into the house of His friends. For Him too they waited; all their hopes were centered on His advent, and yet they would not receive Him, but met Him with the enmity of their evil hearts, and rested not until they had pierced His hands and His feet. All this is familiar to us, but we never weary of meditating upon it, because the cross, and the cross alone, is the measure of His love. One further remark may be added. He cannot conceal His love for His people; for though showing the wounds He had received while in their midst, He yet says, "the house of My friends." Truly, blessed Lord, Thy love is both unchangeable and unquenchable!

He was wounded by His friends, but He was smitten of Jehovah; and thus we read, "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones." v. 7. The application and fulfillment of this scripture have been indicated by the Lord Himself. After the Passover feast, "when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." Matt. 26:30, 31. This makes it plain that the death of Christ in His character as the Shepherd is signified, and thus supplies the key to the interpretation of the passage. The address is to the sword, the sword being a figure of the judicial stroke that fell upon Christ in His death (compare Jer. 47:6); and the command to smite reveals that while the Jews by wicked hands took and crucified their Messiah, He was yet delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Wounded in the house of His friends was man's work and man's wickedness; smitten by the sword of judgment, though man was the instrument, brings in rather God's action; and thus in these two verses we have indicated His sufferings from the hands of man, and His sufferings from the hand of God. Under the hand of man He died for righteousness' sake a martyr; as suffering under the hand of God, because He offered Himself for the glory of God in expiation, He died as the sacrifice for sin. The 6th verse is therefore the 69th, and the 7th is the 22nd Psalm.

Then the character in which the Messiah is here presented must be noticed. First, He is termed "My shepherd." This title is especially used in relation to Israel. We thus read in Ezekiel, "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd." Chap. 34:23. And the Lord when down here claimed for Himself that He was the Good Shepherd, even as also the Apostle speaks of Him as the great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb. 13). As here used, the title describes Him as the Messiah, who, in the words of Isaiah, "shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Isa. 40:11. (Compare Psalm

23; 78:70-72, etc.) Since, moreover, He is termed "My" Shepherd, He is brought before us as the One of God's providing and appointment, and as the One who answers to His mind. In a word, the Messiah will be God's Shepherd for His people when they are once again restored and blessed in the land; and He was presented as such on His first coming, but, refused, He laid down His life for the sheep. He was smitten of Jehovah's sword in the language of our scripture. If, however, the term shepherd points to His official place as the King, "the man that is My fellow" reveals to us His divinity; for of no other than He, who was one with the Father (John 10), who subsisted in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God (Phil. 2), and who, as the Word was with God and was God (John 1), could such language be employed. Wondrous words are they to be spoken of the meek and lowly Jesus, of Him whose "visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men (Isa. 52:14); but being used, they unfold the truth that Jesus of Nazareth was in very deed God manifest in flesh. And remark, as has often been done, that, addressed here in His humiliation as the "fellow" of Jehovah, in His exaltation where He is addressed as God, the saints are spoken of as His "fellows." (Psalm 45:7; Heb. 1:9.)

The Messiah then, as the Shepherd of Israel, and as the One who is described as the fellow of Jehovah, is seen here as smitten - smitten by the sword of judgment because, as the Good Shepherd, He laid down His life for the sheep, thus intercepting the stroke that was their due, that He might, on their behalf, meet all God's holy claims, and glorify Him concerning their sins.

A twofold immediate effect here follows. First, the sheep are scattered. This was fulfilled literally on the night of His apprehension, when all His disciples, those who had acknowledged Him as the Shepherd of Israel, forsook Him and fled; and in another way, we cannot doubt, it has been accomplished in the scattering of the Jews over the face of the whole earth; for it is written, "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock" (Jer. 31:10). He came to gather His sheep, but when they as a people refused to listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, and He was smitten, God in His government, and judicially, "scattered" the flock. It is also added, "I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones." Thus while judgment should descend upon the sheep who did not know the voice of their Shepherd, and who, instead of following Him, demanded His crucifixion, God would cover with His hand the "little ones" who had recognized their Messiah, the remnant in fact, who had attached themselves to Him during His earthly ministry, in that day of evil and trouble.

Last, we have the consequences of the smiting of the Shepherd in their final results for God's people. "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: and they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God." vv. 8, 9. It is clear, we judge, that the whole of the present interval of grace must be interposed between the 7th and 8th verses; for while judgment, and terrible judgment, did fall upon the Jewish nation some thirty or forty years after the death of Christ, no such result as the bringing a third part through the fire into relationship with God was then reached. The accomplishment of this word, therefore, must be looked for in the future, when the Jews shall have been brought back to their land in unbelief, when God will resume His dealings with them, and when, as we know from other scriptures (Matt. 24; Rev. 13) they will be subjected to hitherto unheard of persecutions. It is then that God will deal with them on account of their sin in rejecting their Messiah, and when, as we

read here, "two parts... shall be cut off and die," and when, as the Lord foretold, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Matt. 24:22. But a third part shall be brought through this fire, a fire seven times hotter than even Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, and God will purify them in the process, refining them as silver, and trying them as gold (compare Mal. 3:2, 3; also 1 Pet. 1:7), and thereby bring them back into relationship with Jehovah their God. This represents the end of all God's ways, in His judicial dealings, with the Jews. Because of their sins He had written the sentence of Lo-ammi (not My people) upon them; and now the sentence is reversed, and He out of the fullness of His heart, on His part, declares, It is My people; and they, brought back, repentant and restored, in gratitude respond, The Lord is my God. Blessed, happy, consummation for which God still waits, and for which too His ancient people unconsciously wait, but which will surely arrive in its own time; and when it comes, it will usher in the peace and blessing of the millennial day.

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