

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 30

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

A collection of articles and writings by P. Wilson, R.G. Rule, C. Buchanan from Christian Truth Volume 30, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

114 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Christian Truth Volume 30
1. Aaron's Typical Priestly Garments
2. Abraham and Lot
3. All Is of Grace
4. The All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 1
5. The All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 2
6. The All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 3
7. The All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 4
8. The All-Sufficiency of Scripture
9. All Things Are Yours
10. Always Confident
11. Ambassador in Bonds
12. The Anchor of My Soul
13. Attacks on the Scriptures
14. Be Established in the Present Truth
15. Bethany
16. The Bread of God
17. The Bright Morning Star
18. On Capital Punishment
19. Christ a Reality
20. Christ Our Surety
21. The Christian Home
22. Christ's Reign
23. Come - Follow
24. The Conference at Jerusalem
25. Consider Him
26. Covetousness
27. Deep Plowing: Present Day Evangelism
28. The Disappointments of Life: This Thing Is From Me
29. Do I Lack Rest? Part 1
30. Do I Lack Rest? Part 2
31. Thoughts on Ecclesiastes
32. An Exhortation to Young Believers
33. Faith, Hope and Love
34. Faith's Ground of Confidence
35. Family Living
36. Father Knows
37. Galatians 2:20
38. Garment of Praise for Spirit of Heaviness

39. God Is Better Than Our Faith
40. God Manifest in Flesh: Reverence and Adoration, Not Reason
41. God's Good Pleasure
42. God's Object in Our Trials
43. God's Stars
44. God's Ways of Grace
45. Going on to Perfection
46. Grace
47. Graduation
48. Happy Thought
49. He Heareth Us
50. He Is Coming
51. He Satisfieth the Longing Soul
52. Heavenly Things
53. His Coming
54. How God Judges Sins
55. How to Please God
56. In Thy Youth
57. Israel and the Church
58. It Is God Who Gathers
59. Jesus
60. Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday, and Today and Forever
61. Jesus the Heir of All Things
62. Judging in the Light of His Coming
63. Keep Close
64. The Knowledge of Christ
65. The Latter Times and the Last Days
66. Laying up for Our Children
67. Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled
68. Living Christ in the World
69. The Lord Is Able to Give Thee Much More
70. Martha and Mary
71. My Cup Runneth Over
72. My Friend
73. My Substitute
74. Not Alive in This World
75. Obedience
76. Only and Early
77. The Peacock's Feathers
78. A Personal Interest
79. Philippians 3:8
80. Power Not a Guarantee of Order

- 81.** Proof Not Needed
- 82.** The Rejection and Death of the Lord Jesus
- 83.** Revelation
- 84.** Revelation 22:17 and 20
- 85.** Reverence and Godly Fear
- 86.** Safe
- 87.** The Second Coming of the Lord
- 88.** Self-Occupation
- 89.** Service on Earth and in Heaven
- 90.** The Sheaf of Firstfruits
- 91.** The Shepherd's Voice: Which Will Keep Us, Shrewness?
- 92.** Smiling for Love
- 93.** Solemn Matter
- 94.** Solomon's Temple: the Altar Equal to the Holiest
- 95.** A Spring Within
- 96.** Step by Step
- 97.** Strength in Weakness
- 98.** Stripped but Blessed
- 99.** Suffering and Glory
- 100.** Suited Ministry: Milk or Meat
- 101.** Tell the Good News
- 102.** The Testimony of John the Baptist: the Voice of One Crying
- 103.** Types in Chronicles
- 104.** Under the Surface
- 105.** The Vocation Wherewith Ye Are Called
- 106.** Water in the Word
- 107.** Weapons of Destruction
- 108.** The Weapons of Our Warfare
- 109.** What Amazing Grace!
- 110.** Where Is Thy Talent?
- 111.** Which World?
- 112.** He Who Knew All Covered All
- 113.** The Whole Armor of God

Christian Truth Volume 30

Aaron's Typical Priestly Garments

Read Exod. 28

This chapter speaks to us of the garments with which Aaron was to be clothed to present himself before the Lord. He was the representative of the people, of those twelve tribes of Israel whose names he bore - a type of what Christ is doing for us in heaven.

The Lord is not priest after the order of Aaron, but He exercises priesthood now according to the type presented by Aaron. Now Christ is hid in God, as the high priest when he entered the holiest on the day of atonement. A priest supposes temptations, distress or, as in the epistle to the Hebrews, infirmities. He is the mediator to intercede on behalf of the people, and to represent them before God.

I am weak, but all my weaknesses become not a ground for judgment, but an occasion for God to display all His tenderness and all His compassion toward me by means of our Priest.

Down here, Jesus washes our feet; but before God He represents us in His perfection. He displays to us down here the riches of God's grace toward us, and He presents us to God in the merits of His own perfection.

Exod. 28 shows us how the priest presents us before God. The ephod was the garment characteristic of the high priest. The two parts of it were joined by two shoulder pieces which bore on two onyx stones the names of the twelve tribes.

The girdle is typical of service: "Let your loins be girded."

The breastplate was fastened to the ephod, and also bore on twelve stones the names of the twelve tribes.

The garments were of fine twined linen; they were, as it were, ornamented with all possible graces, the groundwork representing purity itself.

Aaron was to bear the children of Israel before God. He carried them by name on his shoulders.

All the burden of His people and the government are on the shoulders of Christ. If the stones had not been on Aaron's shoulders, the ephod would have fallen; it was fastened by the names of the children of Israel.

With Christ our Priest, we are on His shoulders, borne as a memorial before God. He bears the burden and the government. He does all. Efficacy depends entirely upon Him, even in what we do for the Church.

Aaron also bore the names of his people on his heart, in the breastplate of judgment.

There is not a ray of God's glory and light shining upon Christ which does not also shine on us who are borne upon His heart. The heart of Christ presents us to God. It is not only to obtain special

favours, but it is we ourselves that He presents according to the love there is between Him and God.

The Urim and the Thummim are lights and perfections. Aaron bore on his heart before God the judgment of the children of Israel, according to the perfections of God's presence.

Our sins cannot pass by Christ, and interpose themselves between God and Him. He maintains us in righteousness continually before God, according to the lights and perfections of that presence.

God never hides His face. He may chastise us.

By our failures we may lose communion with Him; but if God hid His face from us, He must first have hidden it from Christ, which could never be. It is hidden now from Israel, who is under the law. Our short-comings raise a cloud between us and God - a consequence of our infirmity - but God's sovereign grace is by no means changed by it.

The "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" (which was graven upon the gold plate, and put on a blue lace on the miter) is always before God. Our prayers ascend in holiness to the Lord because Christ is there.

That which falls short in our holy things being borne by Him, in our offerings (for all our service is imperfect) is through Christ our High Priest presented before God according to divine holiness in Christ.

This chapter, in enabling us to understand better the extent of the love and favor of which

we are the objects, fills us with thanksgiving,

and causes us to find in Christ ever new resources, for our knowledge of Him can always grow and

increase our joy.

Abraham and Lot

It is argued by some that the Church must pass through the Apocalyptic judgments and tribulation because the book of Revelation is given to us. But this is fallacious. It is given as a privilege to the Church to know what is coming to the world, and the dealing of God among Jews and Gentiles, the faithful of whom will only learn in time to escape. So Abraham, who was not in the cities of the plain, knew beforehand what would befall them; whereas "just Lot" was ignorant of their doom, though he was there until the blow was just about to fall.

All Is of Grace

"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:13.

It is all of grace. If you were a Jew under the old order of things, you could boast that you had inherited a lot because of blood. But there is no privilege of that kind now, because all is of grace. You and I cannot by any possible means work ourselves into a place where we are born again. That is God's work. We have not any more to do with the second birth than we had to do with the first. It is not the will of man. You cannot bring anyone else in. You may pray for them, but you cannot bring them into the kingdom of God. God has to do that. It is all of God and it is all of grace. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Rom. 9:16.

You and I are not responsible to bring people into the kingdom of God; we are responsible only to preach the gospel. That is according to God's Word. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.

It is all God's work entirely; and in the 3rd chapter of John's Gospel, the 8th verse states it plainly: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the: sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." He alone knows when it takes place. Yet there is a certain system of things (some of us know of it too well) where unless they can nail you down to the exact place and moment, they will not even accredit you as being a child of God.

Some do not know just when they were saved. The great thing to know is that you ARE saved. Joy comes upon owning and confessing our salvation; the doubting comes from the enemy. I do not remember the day of my natural birth, but I do know that I am alive. I was not brought up in a Christian home, but in early years there came a tenderness in my heart toward divine things; but I cannot tell you just when I was born again.

Having been made children of God through faith in Christ, we do not belong to the Adam creation, but to God now. The source of that life is God, and the nature is from God.

The All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 1

When once the soul has been brought to feel the reality of its condition before God, the depth of its ruin, guilt, and misery, its utter and hopeless bankruptcy, there can be no rest until the Holy Spirit reveals a full and an all-sufficient Christ to the heart. The only possible answer to our total ruin is God's perfect remedy.

This is a very simple but a most important truth; and we may say with all possible assurance, the more deeply and thoroughly the reader learns it for himself the better. The true secret of peace is to get to the very end of a guilty, ruined, helpless, worthless self, and there find an all-sufficient Christ as God's provision for our very deepest need. This truly is rest — a rest which can never be disturbed. There may be sorrow, pressure, conflict, exercise of soul, heaviness through manifold temptations, ups and downs, all sorts of trials and difficulties; but we feel persuaded that when a soul is really brought by God's Spirit to see the end of self, and to rest in a full Christ, it finds a peace which can never be interrupted.

The unsettled state of so many of God's dear people is the result of not having received into their hearts a full Christ as God's own very provision for them. No doubt this sad and painful result may be brought about by various contributing causes, such as a legal mind, a morbid conscience, a self-occupied heart, bad teaching, a secret hankering after this present world, some little reserve in the heart as to the claims of God, of Christ, and of eternity. But, whatever may be the producing cause, we believe it will be found in almost every case that the lack of settled peace, so common among the Lord's people, is the result of not seeing, not believing, what God has made this Christ to be to them, and for them, and that forever.

Now what we purpose in this paper is to show the anxious reader, from the precious pages of the Word of God, that there is treasured up for him in Christ all he can possibly need, whether it be to meet the claims of his conscience, the cravings of his heart, or the exigencies of his path. We shall seek by the grace of God to prove that the work of Christ is the only true resting place for the conscience; His Person, the only true object for the heart; His Word, the only true guide for the path. First then let us dwell for a little upon

THE WORK OF CHRIST AS THE ONLY RESTING PLACE FOR THE CONSCIENCE.

In considering this great subject, two things claim our attention: first, what Christ has done for us; second, what He is doing for us. In the former we have atonement; in the latter, advocacy. He died for us on the cross. He lives for us on the throne. By His precious atoning death, He has met our entire condition as sinners. He has borne our sins, and put them away forever. He stood charged with all our sins — the sins of all who believe in His name. "The LORD (Jehovah) hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). And again, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18).

This is a grand and all-important truth for the anxious soul — a truth which lies at the very foundation of the whole Christian position. It is impossible that any truly awakened soul, any

spiritually enlightened conscience, can enjoy divinely settled peace until this most precious truth is laid hold of in simple faith. I must know upon divine authority that all my sins are put away forever out of God's sight; that He Himself has disposed of them in such a manner as to satisfy all the claims of His throne, and all the attributes of His nature; that He has glorified Himself in the putting away of my sins, in a far higher and more wonderful manner than if He had sent me to an everlasting hell on account of them.

Yes, He Himself has done it. God has laid our sins on Jesus, and He tells us so in His holy Word, so that we may know it upon divine authority — an authority that cannot lie. God planned it; God did it; God says it. It is all of God from first to last, and we have simply to rest in it like a little child. How do I know that Jesus bore my sins in His own body on the tree? By the very same authority which tells me I had sins to be borne. God in His marvelous and matchless grace assures me, a poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinner, that He has Himself undertaken the whole matter of my sins, and disposed of it in such a manner as to bring a rich harvest of glory to His own eternal name, throughout the wide universe, in presence of all created intelligence.

Oh! the profound mystery of the cross! — the glorious mystery of redeeming love! I see God Himself taking all my sins. I see Him laying them all upon the head of my blessed Substitute, and dealing with Him about them. I see all the billows and waves of God's righteous wrath — His wrath against my sins — His wrath which should have consumed my soul and body in hell throughout a dreary eternity; I see them all rolling over the Man who stood in my stead; who represented me before God; who bore all that was due to me; with whom a holy God dealt as He should have dealt with me. I see inflexible justice, holiness, truth, and righteousness dealing with my sins, and making a clear and eternal riddance of them. Not one of them is suffered to pass! There is no connivance, no palliation, no slurring over, no indifference. This could not possibly be, once God Himself took the matter in hand. His glory was at stake; His unsullied holiness, His eternal majesty, the lofty claims of His government.

All these had to be provided for in such a way as to glorify Himself in view of angels, men, and devils. He might have sent me to hell — righteously, justly, sent me to hell — because of my sins.

Others may reason as they please as to the injustice of an eternity of punishment for a life of sin — the utter want of proportion between a few years of wrong-doing and endless ages of torment in the lake of fire. They may reason, but I thoroughly believe and unreservedly confess that for a single sin against such a being as the God whom I see at the cross, I richly deserve everlasting punishment in the deep, dark, and dismal pit of hell.

But — eternal hallelujahs to the God of all grace — instead of sending us to hell because of our sins, He sent His Son to be the propitiation for those sins. And in the unfolding of the marvelous plan of redemption, we see a holy God dealing with the question of our sins, and executing judgment upon them in the Person of His well-beloved, eternal, and co-equal Son, in order that the full flood-tide of His love might flow down into our hearts. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

Now this must give peace to the conscience, if only it be received in the simplicity of faith. How is it possible for a person to believe that God has satisfied Himself as to his sins, and not have peace? If God says to us, Your "sins and iniquities will I remember no more," what could we desire further

as a basis of peace for our conscience? If God assures me that all my sins are blotted out as a thick cloud — that they are cast behind His back — forever gone from His sight — should I not have peace? If He shows me the Man who bore my sins on the cross, now crowned at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, ought not my soul to enter into perfect rest as to the question of my sins? Most assuredly.

For how, I ask, did Christ reach the place which He now fills on the throne of God? Was it as God over all, blessed forever? No; for He was always that. Was it as the eternal Son of the Father? No; He was ever that — ever in the bosom of the Father — the object of the Father's eternal and ineffable delight. Was it as a spotless, holy, perfect man — one whose nature was absolutely pure, perfectly free from sin? No; for in that character and on that ground He could at any moment, between the manger and the cross, have claimed a place at the right hand of God. How was it then? Eternal praise to the God of all grace! it was as the One who had by His death accomplished the glorious work of redemption — the One who had stood charged with the full weight of our sins — the One who had perfectly satisfied all the righteous claims of that throne on which He now sits.

This is a grand, cardinal point for the anxious reader to seize. It cannot fail to emancipate the heart and tranquilize the conscience. We cannot possibly behold by faith the Man who was nailed to the tree, now crowned on the throne, and not have peace with God. The Lord Jesus Christ, having taken upon Himself our sins and the judgment due to them, could not be where He now is if a single one of those sins remained unatoned for. To see the sin-bearer crowned with glory is to see our sins gone forever from the divine presence. Where are our sins? They are all obliterated. How do we know this? The One who took them all upon Himself has passed through the heavens to the very highest pinnacle of glory. Eternal justice has wreathed His blessed brow with a diadem of glory, as the Accomplisher of our redemption — the Bearer of our sins — thus proving beyond all question or possibility of a question, that our sins are all put away out of God's sight forever. A crowned Christ, and a clear conscience are, in the blessed economy of grace, inseparably linked together. Wondrous fact! Well may we chant with all our ransomed powers the praises of redeeming love.

But let us see how this most consolatory truth is set forth in Holy Scripture. In Romans 3 we read, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission [or passing over] of sins that are past [in time gone by], through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Again, in chapter 4, speaking of Abraham's faith being counted to him for righteousness, the Apostle adds, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." Here we have God introduced to our souls as the One who raised from the dead the Bearer of our sins. Why did He do so? Because the One who had been delivered for our offenses had perfectly glorified Him

respecting those offenses, and put them away forever. God not only sent His only begotten Son into the world, but He bruised Him for our iniquities, and raised Him from the dead, in order that we might know and believe that our iniquities are all disposed of in such a manner as to glorify Him infinitely and everlastingly. Eternal and universal homage to His name!

But we have further testimony on this grand fundamental truth. In Hebrews 1 we read such soul-stirring words as these: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Our Lord Christ, blessed be His name, would not take His seat on the throne of God until He had, by the offering of Himself on the cross, purged our sins. Hence a risen Christ at God's right hand is the glorious and unanswerable proof that our sins are all gone, for He could not be where He now is if a single one of those sins remained. God raised from the dead the selfsame Man on whom He Himself had laid the full weight of our sins. Thus all is settled — divinely, eternally settled. It is as impossible that a single sin can be found on the very weakest believer in Jesus, as on Jesus Himself. This is a wonderful thing to be able to say, but it is the solid truth of God, established in manifold places in Holy Scripture; and the soul that believes it must possess a peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

The All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 2

Thus far we have been occupied with the aspect of the work of Christ which bears upon the question of the forgiveness of sins, and we earnestly trust that the reader is thoroughly clear and settled on this grand point. It is assuredly his happy privilege so to be, if only he will take God at His word. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18).

Some would try to persuade us that it is not possible to know that our sins are forgiven, that we must go on to the end of our life in a state of complete uncertainty on this most vital and important question. If this be so, what has become of the precious gospel of the grace of God — the glad tidings of salvation? In view of such miserable teaching as this, what mean those glowing words of the blessed Apostle Paul in the synagogue of Antioch? "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Jesus Christ, dead and risen) is preached [not promised as a future thing, but proclaimed now] unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are [not shall be, or hope to be] justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39).

Glory be to God, His own testimony assures us that He might bring us to God — not merely bring us to heaven when we die, but bring us to God now. How does He bring us to God? Tied and bound with the chain of our sins? with an intolerable burden of guilt on our souls? No, indeed; He brings us to God without spot or stain or charge. He brings us to God in all His own acceptableness. Is there any guilt on Him? No; there was, blessed be His name, when He stood in our stead, but it is gone — gone forever — cast as lead into the unfathomable waters of divine forgetfulness. He was charged with our sins on the cross. God laid on Him all our iniquities, and dealt with Him about them. The whole question of our sins, according to God's estimate thereof, was fully gone into and definitely, because divinely settled between God and Christ amid the awful shadows of Calvary. Yes, it was all done once and forever there. How do we know it? By the authority of the only true God. His Word assures us that we have redemption through the blood of Christ, the remission of sins according to the riches of His grace. He declares to us in accents of sweetest, richest, deepest mercy, that our sins and iniquities He will remember no more. Is not this enough? Shall we still continue to cry out that we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins? Shall we thus cast a slur upon the perfect work of Christ? Shall we thus tarnish the luster of divine grace and give the lie to the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the Scripture of truth? Far be the thought! It must not be so. Let us rather hail with thanksgiving the blessed boon so freely conferred upon us by love divine through the precious blood of Christ

It is the joy of the heart of God to forgive us our sins. Yes, God delights in pardoning iniquity and transgression. It gratifies and glorifies Him to pour into the broken and contrite heart the precious balm of His own pardoning love and mercy. He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up, and bruised Him on the cursed tree, in order that He might be able, in perfect righteousness, to let the rich streams of grace flow forth from His large, loving heart, to the poor, guilty, self-destroyed,

conscience-smitten sinner.

But, should it be that the reader still feels disposed to inquire how he may have the assurance that this blessed remission of sins — this fruit of Christ's atoning work — applies to him, let him hearken to those magnificent words which flowed from the lips of the risen Savior, as He commissioned the earliest heralds of His grace. "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved [was necessary for] Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47).

Here we have the great and glorious commission — its basis, its authority, its sphere. Christ has suffered. This is the meritorious ground of remission of sins. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins — a remission as full and complete as the precious blood of Christ is fitted to effect.

But where is the authority? "It is written." Blessed, indisputable authority! Nothing can ever shake it. I know on the solid authority of the Word of God, that my sins are all forgiven, all blotted out, all gone forever, all cast behind God's back, so that they can never by any possibility rise against me.

Finally, as to the sphere. It is "all nations." This includes me, beyond all question. There is no sort of exception, condition, or qualification. The blessed tidings were to be wafted on the wings of love to all nations — to all the world — to every creature under heaven. How could I exclude myself from this world-wide commission?

And surely if any further encouragement were needed, it is found in the fact that the blessed ambassadors were to begin "at Jerusalem" — the very guiltiest spot on the face of the earth. They were to make the earliest offer of pardon to the very murderers of the Son of God. This the Apostle Peter does in those words of marvelous and transcendent grace, "Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:26).

It is not possible to conceive anything richer or fuller or more magnificent than this. The grace that could reach the murderers of the Son of God, can reach anyone. The blood that could cleanse the guilt of such a crime can cleanse the vilest sinner outside the precincts of hell.

But blessed forever be the God of all grace, it is not only remission of sins which is announced to us through the atoning death of Christ. This in itself would be a boon and a blessing of the very highest order; and, as we have seen, we enjoy it according to the largeness of the heart of God, and according to the value and efficacy of the death of Christ, as God estimates it. But, besides the full and perfect remission of sins, we have also

ENTIRE DELIVERANCE FROM THE PRESENT POWER OF SIN.

This is a grand point for every true lover of holiness. According to the glorious economy of grace, the same work which secures the complete remission of sins has broken forever the power of sin. It is not only that the sins of the life are blotted out, but the sin of the nature is condemned. The believer is privileged to regard himself as dead to sin. He can sing with a glad heart —

"For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died,

And I have died in Thee;
Thou'rt risen, my bands are all untied,
And now Thou liv'st in me.
The Father's face of radiant grace
Shines now in light on me."

This is the proper breathing of a Christian. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). This is Christianity. The old "I" crucified, and Christ living in me. The Christian is a new creation. Old things are passed away. The death of Christ has closed forever the history of the old "I"; and hence, though sin dwells in the believer, its power is broken and gone forever. Not only is its guilt canceled, but its terrible dominion is completely overthrown.

This is the glorious doctrine of Romans 6-8. The thoughtful student of this most magnificent epistle will observe that, from Romans 3:21 to Romans 6:11, we have the work of Christ applied to the question of sins. And from Romans 5:12 to the end of Romans 8 we have another aspect of that work, namely, its application to the question of sin — "our old man" — "the body of sin" — "sin in the flesh." There is no such thing in Scripture as the forgiveness of sin. God has condemned sin, not forgiven it — an immensely important distinction. God has set forth His eternal abhorrence of sin, in the cross of Christ. He has expressed and executed His judgment upon it; and now the believer can see himself as linked and identified with the One who died on the cross, and is raised from the dead. He has passed out of the sphere of sin's dominion into that new and blessed sphere where grace reigns through righteousness. "God be thanked," says the Apostle, "that ye were (once, but now no longer are to be) the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine whereto ye were delivered [margin]. Being then made free from sin (not merely sins forgiven), ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. 6:17-22).

Here lies the precious secret of holy living. We are dead to sin, alive to God. The reign of sin is over. What has sin to do with a dead man? Nothing. Well then the believer has died with Christ; he was buried with Christ; he is risen with Christ to walk in newness of life. He lives under the precious reign of grace and he has his fruit unto holiness. The man who draws a plea from the abundance of divine grace to live in sin, denies the very foundation of Christianity. "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Impossible. It would be a denial of the whole Christian standing. To imagine the Christian as one who is to go on from day to day, week to week, month to month, and year to year, sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting, is to degrade Christianity and falsify the whole Christian position. To say that a Christian must go on sinning because he has the flesh in him is to ignore the death of Christ in one of its grand aspects, and to give the lie to the whole of the Apostle's teaching in Romans 6-8. Thank God, there is no necessity whatever why the believer should commit sin.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” We should not justify ourselves in a single sinful thought. It is our sweet privilege to walk in the light as God is in the light; and, most surely, when we are walking in the light, we are not committing sin. Alas! we get out of the light and commit sin; but the normal, the true, the divine idea of a Christian is, walking in the light and not committing sin. A sinful thought is foreign to the true genius of Christianity. We have sin in us, and shall have it so long

as we are in the body; but if we walk in the Spirit, the sin in our nature will not show itself in the life. To say that we need not sin, is to state a Christian privilege; to say that we cannot sin is a deceit and a delusion.

The All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 3

From what has already passed before us, we learn that the grand result of the work of Christ in the past is to give us a divinely perfect standing before God. “He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). He has introduced us into the divine Presence in all His own perfect acceptability, in the full credit and virtue of His name, of His Person, and of His work; so that, as the Apostle John declares, “As He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17).

Such is the settled standing of the very feeblest lamb in all the blood-bought flock of Christ. Nor could it possibly be otherwise. It must be either this or eternal perdition. There is not the breadth of a hair between this standing of absolute perfection before God and a condition of guilt and ruin. We are either in our sins, or in a risen Christ. There is no middle ground. We are either covered with guilt, or complete in Christ. But the believer is declared by the authoritative voice of the Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture to be “complete in Him” — perfect as pertaining to his conscience — perfected in perpetuity — “clean every whit” — “accepted in the beloved” “made [or become] the righteousness of God in Him.”

And all this through the sacrifice of the cross. That precious atoning death of Christ forms the solid and irrefragable foundation of the Christian’s standing. “This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Heb. 10:12). A seated Christ is the glorious proof and the perfect definition of the believer’s place in the presence of God. Our Lord Christ, having glorified God about our sins, and borne His judgment on our entire condition as sinners, has conducted us in living association with Himself into a place not only of forgiveness, acceptance, and peace, but of complete deliverance from the dominion of sin — a place of assured victory over everything that could possibly be against us, whether indwelling sin, the fear of Satan, the law, or this present evil world.

Such, we repeat, is the absolutely settled standing of the believer, if we are to be taught by Holy Scripture. And we earnestly entreat the Christian reader not to be satisfied with anything less than this. Let him not any longer accept the muddled teachings of Christendom’s creeds, and its liturgical services, which only drive the soul back into the darkness, distance, and bondage of Judaism — that system which God found fault with, and which He has forever abolished, because it did not meet His holy mind or satisfy His loving heart in giving the worshiper perfect peace, perfect liberty, perfect nearness to Himself and that forever.

We solemnly call upon all the Lord’s people throughout the various sections of the professing church to consider where they are, and to see how far they understand and enjoy the true Christian position as set forth in the various passages of Scripture which we have quoted, and which might easily be multiplied many times. Let them diligently and faithfully compare the teachings of Christendom with the Word of God, and see how far they agree. In this way they will find how much the professing Christianity of the present day stands in contrast with the living teachings of the New Testament; and, as a consequence, souls are robbed of the precious privileges which belong to them as Christians, and they are kept in the moral distance which

characterized the Mosaic economy.

However, we must pursue our subject, and by so doing furnish the very best remedy that can possibly be suggested for the deplorable condition of so many of the Lord's people.

We have dwelt upon that precious work which our Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished for us in the putting away of all our sins, and in the condemnation of sin, securing for us perfect remission of the former, and entire deliverance from the latter as a ruling power. The Christian is one who is not only forgiven but delivered. Christ has died for him, and he has died in Christ. Hence he is free as one who is raised from the dead and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He is a new creation. He has passed from death unto life. Death and judgment are behind Him, and nothing but glory before Him. He possesses an unblotted title and an unclouded prospect.

Now if all this be indeed true of every child of God — and Scripture says it is — what more do we want? Nothing, as to title; nothing, as to standing; nothing, as to hope. As to all these, we have absolute divine perfection. But then our state is not perfect; our walk is not perfect. We are still in the body, compassed about with manifold infirmities, exposed to manifold temptations, liable to stumble, to fall, and to wander. We are unable of ourselves to think a right thought, or to keep ourselves for one moment in the blessed position into which grace has introduced us. True it is, we have everlasting life, and we are linked to the living Head in heaven by the Holy Spirit sent down to earth, so that we are eternally secure. Nothing can ever touch our life, inasmuch as it is "hid with Christ in God."

But while nothing can touch our life or interfere with our standing, yet, seeing that our state is imperfect, and our walk imperfect, our communion is liable to be interrupted, and hence it is that we need THE PRESENT WORK OF CHRIST FOR US.

Jesus lives at the right hand of God for us. His active intervention on our behalf never ceases for a single moment. He has passed through the heavens in virtue of accomplished atonement, and there He ever carries on His perfect advocacy for us before God. He is there as our subsisting righteousness to maintain us ever in the divine integrity of the position and relationship into which His atoning death has introduced us. Thus we read in Romans 5:10, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." So also in Hebrews 4 we read, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession [confession]. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16). Again, in Hebrews 7, "But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:24-25). And in Hebrews 9, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24).

Then in the first epistle of John, we have the same great subject presented under a somewhat different aspect. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for

our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2).

How precious is all this to the truehearted Christian who is ever conscious — deeply and painfully conscious — of his weakness, need, infirmity, and failure! How, we may lawfully inquire, is it possible for anyone with his eye resting on such passages as we have just quoted, to say nothing of his own self-consciousness, the sense of his own imperfect state and walk, to call in question the Christian's need of the unceasing ministry of Christ on his behalf? Is it not surprising that any reader of the epistle to the Hebrews, any observer of the state and walk of the most advanced believer, should be found denying the application of Christ's priesthood and advocacy to Christians now?

For whom, let us ask, is Christ now living and acting at the right hand of God? Is it for the world? Clearly not, for He says in John 17, "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine" (John 17:9). And who are these? Are they the Jewish remnant? No, that remnant is yet to appear on the scene. Who are they then? Believers, children of God, Christians, who are now passing through this sinful world, liable to fail and to contract defilement every step of the way. These are the subjects of Christ's priestly ministry. He died to make them clean. He lives to keep them clean. By His death He expiated our guilt, and by His life He cleanses us through the action of the Word by the power of the Holy Spirit. "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." We have expiation and cleansing through a crucified Saviour. The double stream emanated from the pierced side of Christ, dead for us. All praise to His name!

We have all in virtue of the precious death of Christ. Is it a question of our guilt? It is canceled by the blood of atonement. Is it a question of our daily shortcomings? We have an advocate with the Father. "If any man sin." He does not say, "If any man repent." No doubt there is, and must be, repentance and self-judgment. But how are they produced? Whence do they proceed? Here it is: "We have an advocate with the Father." It is His all-prevailing intercession that procures for the sinning one the grace of repentance, self-judgment, and confession.

It is of the very utmost importance for the Christian reader to be thoroughly clear as to this great cardinal truth of the advocacy or priesthood of Christ. We sometimes erroneously think that when we fail in our work, something has to be done on our part to set matters straight between our souls and God. We forget that before we are even conscious of the failure — before our conscience becomes really cognizant of the fact — our blessed Advocate has been to the Father about it; and it is to His intercession we are indebted for the grace of repentance, confession, and restoration. "If any man sin, we have" — what? The blood to return to? No; mark carefully what the Holy Spirit declares. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Why does He say, "the righteous"? Why not the gracious, the merciful, the sympathizing? Is He not all this? Most surely; but not any one of these attributes would be in place here, inasmuch as the blessed Apostle is putting before us the consolatory truth, that in all our errors, our sins, and our failures, we have a "righteous" representative ever before the righteous God, the holy Father, so that our affairs can never fall through. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us"; and because He ever liveth, "He is able... to save them to the uttermost" — right through to the very end — "that come unto God by Him."

What solid comfort is here for the people of God! And how needful for our souls to be established in the knowledge and sense of it. Some there are who have an imperfect sense of the true standing of a Christian, because they do not see what Christ has done for them in the past. Others, on the contrary, have such an entirely one-sided view of the state of the Christian, that they do not see our need of what Christ is doing for us now. Both must be corrected. The former are ignorant of the extent and value of the atonement; the latter are ignorant of the place and application of the advocacy. Such is the perfection of our standing that the Apostle can say, "As He is, so are we in this world." If this were all, we should certainly have no need of priesthood or advocacy. But then, such is our state that the Apostle has to say, "If any man sin." This proves our continual need of the Advocate. And, blessed be God, we have Him continually; we have Him ever living for us. He lives and serves on high.

He is our subsisting righteousness before our God. He lives to keep us always right in heaven, and to set us right when we go wrong upon earth. He is the divine and indissoluble link between our souls and God.

The All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 4

Having in the three preceding parts of this series sought to unfold the grand foundation truths connected with the work of Christ for us — His work in the past and His work in the present — His atonement and His advocacy — we shall now seek by the gracious aid of the Spirit of God to present to the reader something of what the Scriptures teach us as to the second part of our subject; namely,

CHRIST AS AN OBJECT FOR THE HEART.

It is a wonderfully blessed thing to be able to say, "I have found an object which perfectly satisfies my heart — I have found Christ." It is this which gives true elevation above the world. It renders us thoroughly independent of the resources to which the unconverted heart ever betakes itself. It gives settled rest. It imparts a calmness and quietness to the spirit which the world cannot comprehend. The poor votary of the world may think the life of the true Christian a very slow, dull, stupid affair indeed. He may marvel how such a one can manage to get on without what he calls amusement, recreation, and pleasure — no theaters — no balls or parties — no concerts — no cards or billiards — no hunts or races, no dances, and so forth.

To deprive the unconverted man of such things would almost drive him to despair or lunacy. But the Christian does not want such things, would not have them. They would be a perfect weariness to him. We speak, of course, of the true Christian, of one who is not merely a Christian in name, but in reality. Alas, many profess to be Christians, and take very high ground in their profession, who are, nevertheless, to be found mixed up in all the vain and frivolous pursuits of the men of this world. They may be seen at the communion table on the Lord's day and at a theater or a concert on Monday. They may be found assaying to take part in some one or other of the many branches of Christian work on Sunday and, during the week, you may see them in the ball-room, at the race-course, or some such scene of folly and vanity.

It is very evident that such persons know nothing of Christ as an object for the heart. Indeed, it is very questionable how anyone with a single spark of divine life in the soul can find pleasure in the wretched pursuits of a godless world. The true and earnest Christian turns away from such things — turns away instinctively. And this not merely because of the positive wrong and evil of them — though most surely he feels them to be wrong and evil — but because he has no taste for them, and because he has found something infinitely superior, something which perfectly satisfies all the desires of the new nature. Could we imagine an angel from heaven taking pleasure at a ball, a theater, or a race-course? The bare thought is supremely ridiculous. All such scenes are perfectly foreign to a heavenly being.

And what is a Christian? He is a heavenly man; he is a partaker of the divine nature. He is dead to the world — dead to sin — alive to God. He has not a single link with the world. He belongs to heaven. He is no more of the world than Christ his Lord. Could Christ take part in the amusements, gaieties, and follies of the world? The very idea were blasphemy. Well then what of

the Christian? Is he to be found where his Lord could not be? Can he consistently take part in things which he knows in his heart are contrary to Christ? Can he go into places and scenes and circumstances in which he must admit his Saviour and Lord can take no part? Can he go and have fellowship with a world which hates the One to whom he professes to owe everything?

It may, perhaps, seem to some of our readers that we are taking too high ground. We would ask such, What ground are we to take? Surely Christian ground, if we are Christians. Well then if we are to take Christian ground, how are we to know what that ground really is? Assuredly from the New Testament. And what does it teach? Does it afford any warrant for the Christian to mix himself in any shape or form with the amusements and vain pursuits of this present evil world? Let us hearken to the weighty words of our blessed Lord in John 17. Let us hear from His lips the truth as to our portion, our position, and our path in this world. He says, addressing the Father, "I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:14-18).

Is it possible to conceive a closer measure of identification than that set before us in these words? Twice over in this brief passage our Lord declares that we are not of the world, even as He is not. What has our blessed Lord to do with the world? Nothing. The world has utterly rejected Him and cast Him out. It nailed Him to a shameful cross between two malefactors. The world lies as fully and as freshly under the charge of all this, as though the act of the crucifixion took place yesterday, at the very center of its civilization, and with the unanimous consent of all. There is not so much as a single moral link between Christ and the world. The world is stained with His murder, and will have to answer to God for the crime.

How solemn is this! What a serious consideration for Christians! We are passing through a world that crucified our Lord and Master, and He declares that we are not of that world, even as He is not of it. Hence it follows that in so far as we have any fellowship with the world, we are false to Christ. What should we think of a wife who could sit and laugh and joke with a set of men who had murdered her husband? And yet this is precisely what professing Christians do when they mix themselves up with this present evil world, and make themselves part and parcel of it.

It will perhaps be said, "What are we to do? Are we to go out of the world?" By no means. Our Lord expressly says, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." In it, but not of it, is the true principle for the Christian. To use a figure, the Christian is in the world like a diver. He is in the midst of an element which would destroy him, were he not protected from its action, and sustained by unbroken communication with the scene above.

And what is the Christian to do in the world? What is his mission? Here it is: "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." And again, in John 20:21, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."

Such is the Christian's mission. He is not to shut himself within the walls of a monastery or convent. Christianity does not consist in joining a brotherhood or a sisterhood. Nothing of the kind.

We are called to move up and down in the varied relations of life, and to act in our divinely appointed spheres to the glory of God. It is not a question of what we are doing, but of how we do it. All depends upon the object which governs our hearts. If Christ be the commanding and absorbing object of the heart, all will be right. If He be not, nothing is right. Two persons may sit down at the same table to eat; the one eats to gratify his appetite, the other eats to the glory of God — eats simply to keep his body in proper working order as God's vessel, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the instrument for Christ's service.

So in everything. It is our sweet privilege to set the Lord always before us. He is our model. As He was sent into the world, so are we. What did He come to do? To glorify God. How did He live? By the Father. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me" (John 6:57).

This makes it all so simple. Christ is the standard and touchstone for everything. It is no longer a question of mere right and wrong according to human rules. It is simply a question of what is worthy of Christ. Would He do this or that? Would He go here or there? He left us an example, that we "should follow His steps"; and, most assuredly, we should not go where we cannot trace His blessed footsteps. If we go hither and thither to please ourselves, we are not treading in His steps, and we cannot expect to enjoy His blessed presence.

Christian reader, here lies the real secret of the whole matter. The grand question is just this — Is Christ my one object? What am I living for? Can I say, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"? Nothing less than this is worthy of a Christian. It is a poor miserable thing to be content with being saved, and then to go on with the world and live for self-pleasing and self-interest — to accept salvation as the fruit of Christ's toil and passion, and then live at a distance from Himself. What should we think of a child who only cared about the good things provided by his father's hand, and never sought his father's company — yes, preferred the company of strangers? We should justly despise him. But how much more despicable is the Christian who owes his present and his eternal all to the work of Christ, and yet is content to live at a cold distance from His blessed Person, caring not for the furtherance of His cause — the promotion of His glory!

The All-Sufficiency of Scripture

It is an immense blessing to have an assured sense of the sufficiency of Scripture, and to tremble at God's Word, and therefore to be always ready to be corrected by it, quite conscious that when there is any miscarriage or failure in the course we have adopted, that it is to be discovered in the inaccurate way we have used the Word of God, and not from any lack in it. It is able to make "the man of God... perfect, thoroughly furnished." It is beyond the code of the wisest nation. Cases may and do arise among men, for which there is no legislation; no such thing can ever be supposed or averred of the Scriptures. When we err in judgment or counsel, it must simply arise from our imperfect apprehension of the Word of God, or from a misuse of it. Constantly I find the way one quotes Scripture, indicates either his knowledge or ignorance; and the man who is most subject to the Word, is the one, invariably the most ready, to subject everything to the Word of God, and to be canvassed by it, for he knows that if he is right he will be corroborated, and if he is wrong, he is glad to be set right.

The Lord grant that we may be more jealous in holding fast the form of sound words, like one afraid to loosen one stave of the cask, or one spoke in the wheel, lest all should be broken up.

All Things Are Yours

1 Cor. 3:21

Every possible glory is ours: relative blessedness, for we are children; associated blessedness in union with the blessed One, for we are the bride; official nearness and glory, for we are kings and priests; human blessedness, for we shall be perfect men after the image of the second Adam; corporate blessedness, for we shall joy together; individual blessedness, for we shall have a name which no one knows but he that receives it; and we shall have the fullness of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, unhindered by these poor bodies.

Always Confident

When speaking of the assurance of salvation, the Lord's servants are often met with such answers as, "It does not do to be too sure," or, "Is it not presumption?" or, "I do not think it right to be so confident." If any who are accustomed to make such replies should read these lines, we would earnestly beseech them to weigh the passage of Scripture where the words at the head of this paper occur, and we feel assuredly they will no longer speak so foolishly. Let us quote it: "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him" (or, acceptable to Him). 2 Cor. 5:5-9.

It is the Apostle Paul who thus speaks of that which is true of Christians, and he shows that all the work and blessing is of God; He is the source and author of it; it is He that wrought His people for it, and He who gave and still gives them the earnest of the Spirit. "Therefore we are always confident." What a solid foundation for our confidence to be based upon! confidence because from beginning to end it is a work of God. Man has no part in the matter. He is perfectly helpless in himself; without strength he can do nothing. But God who has the glory in view comes in and fits the poor, weak human vessel for it. He takes us up in pure grace, puts away our sins, justifies us in Christ, and gives us the Spirit as the earnest of the glory to follow. "Therefore we are always confident." Well may we be. Who can frustrate the purpose, power, and work of God? No one. Satan is a vanquished foe, man is set aside in the cross, and the whole work is of God - a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). How then can the Christian be too confident? Confidence in God is that which honors Him.

"But my difficulty," says one, "is in myself; I feel I am such a poor failing creature that I fear to be too confident." Just so, and well you may, as long as you are looking at yourself. If you wait for confidence until you cease to fail, you will have to wait a long time; indeed, until you leave this scene altogether. Confidence in God displaces self-confidence. The Apostle was always confident because he had learned to rest always in God instead of himself; and that, dear reader, is a lesson you would also do well to get perfected in.

And mark next what goes along with it - knowledge. "Knowing," he continues, "that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:)." We are confident, not hoping, nor thinking, nor feeling, but knowing. "Always confident, knowing." He was longing to be with the Lord - we should also. But how can that be if we are self-occupied and full of doubt and uncertainty? Not that he desired to die, but to be glorified, as he says in the 4th verse: "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." He knew that he might fall asleep, his spirit passing out of the body into the presence of the Lord in the unclothed state; but this is not the proper and immediate Christian hope. Christ is coming, and mortality shall be swallowed up of

life, not of death. The Christian should be looking to go up, not down; to go into glory, and not into the unclothed state. We wait "for the adoption, to wit, the redemption" (not the corruption) "of our body" (Rom. 8:23).

And then in the 8th verse he confirms his statement - "We are confident, I say," etc. Not a word, you see, dear reader, to bolster you up in your up-and-down state, not the slightest ground for you to have the least bit of confidence in yourself in any way whatever, and not the vestige of an "of" or a "but" to justify a moment's lack of confidence in God as to the future. God begins, carries on, and ends His work. He saves, gives the Spirit as the earnest, and fills the soul with confidence and knowledge, removing all fear, and creates a desire in the soul too to be with Christ where He is. He would have us then "always confident." Are you?

But perhaps the minds of some of our readers revert to another passage where the same Apostle says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." 1 Cor. 9:27. Now, dear friend, -we. would ask you before we say a word on this, Do' you really want to understand the passage, and to get clear in your soul about it? or do you turn to it, as we fear many too often do, to bolster yourself up in a certain system of theology? If the former, we may be able through grace to truly help you, which is our desire; but if the latter, we fear it will be labor in vain as far as you are concerned. Now, whatever it may mean, the Word of God can never contradict itself, so that it cannot contain anything to lessen in the slightest degree the "always confident" of 2 Cor. 5:6-8.

To understand it you must bear in mind that the writer is addressing an assembly of Christians that was allowing varied evils in its midst - an assembly where there was loud talk but low walk - and he is endeavoring to get at their consciences, and hence applies a principle to himself which he intended to reach them. Take especial note, first of all, that he is illustrating the Christian course by a race for a prize and a fight for the mastery, saying, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." 1 Cor. 9:24-26.

Now salvation is not a prize, neither do we run a race nor fight for it. Salvation is of pure grace, and every true believer starts with it before he runs the race or enters upon the combat. The prize is additional. We run and fight because we are saved, but not to be saved or to keep saved. But there is an incorruptible crown for those who are successful. Paul had started on the course and begun the fight; so had they. He was saved, and knew it before he started, and was always confident. So here he says, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." He had no uncertainty as to the issue. Mark it well, for you will never understand this passage that troubles so many without it. But he knows that he has to run a real race and to cope with real enemies, though invisible ones. He puts all his soul into it, so to speak, keeping his body under and bringing it into subjection, "lest," as he adds finally, "that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

"Ah! there now," you say, "there's the difficult point; what do you make of that?" Why simply that he puts it thus, as we have said, to reach the conscience of the Corinthians, whose walk and ways were bad. Many of them were indulging their bodies instead of keeping them under and bringing

them into subjection - preaching to others, but not practicing - and though they came behind in no gift, they had settled down as if there were no race, no fight, no prize, no crown. It is as though he had said, "Take you care that it is a reality with you. You may preach, but what if after all it should turn out to be a mere external thing with you, and you should be a castaway? Though I am an apostle, and though I have no uncertainty, yet I cannot afford to act as many of you are doing, lest after I have preached, I myself should be a castaway." Many a preacher, thought to be a Christian, has turned out a mere castaway. Paul had no fear whatever that he might be one. To allow it for a moment would not only contradict his "always confident," which is impossible, but many other passages of his own and other's writings. No, it was a powerful, pointed way of reaching the consciences of those whose blessing he so earnestly desired.

It is one thing, dear reader, to cast in your lot with Christians and to preach, but it is quite another to be a sinner saved by grace, running with patience the race set before us, fighting the good fight of faith, looking for the glory. By grace ye are saved, not by running or fighting; and if saved, God would have you always confident. But if any profess, whose life is a denial of their profession, the Word of God is unmistakably plain, "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 2:4. Such will surely prove to be worthless castaways. May each believer in Jesus who reads these lines be found always confident till that day.

Ambassador in Bonds

"Praying always... and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds." Eph. 6:18-20. Did you ever hear of such a thing as the ambassador of one nation being put in bonds by the nation to which he was sent? Why, God has fared worse in this world than any nation in it would; and pray, what message did this ambassador bring? A message of boundless grace. And that is the way He has been treated. The law of nations would not allow it for an instant. Yet that is the way God in the person of His servants and witnesses has consented to be treated for almost 2000 years.

The Anchor of My Soul

If Christ is at the right hand of God to make intercession for me, I see Him there as the anchor of my soul within the veil; and if the effect of tearing open all in my soul, and showing me my wretchedness, be to show me that He who does it is there for me, conforming me to Himself to make me like Himself, is it not most precious?

I know only what a poor thing I am, when I get inside the veil; but there, I can be talking to God about Christ, saying, "Is He not my Savior? Is He not my life-giver? Is not all to be found in Him? Is He not the portion of all who believe in Him?"

If you can talk to God of what Christ is to you, and God is looking at that Christ as the answer to all your difficulties, can you go away unsatisfied? Impossible.

Attacks on the Scriptures

People are energetic enough in these days, but their energy is against the gospel. It is not so with all, thank God! but the peculiar feature of the present age is that the active aggression is against Scripture, an organized rebellion proceeding from professors in the high seats of human learning. Not only daring individuals here and there attack Scripture, but the nominal teachers and heads of the clergy combine to do it with comparative impunity as if they were determined to concentrate the whole weight of their personal and official influence to that end.

This has a voice for us; if we have understanding of the times, let us take care that we stand firmly, conscientiously, and uncompromisingly, though humbly on the foundation of divine truth, caring for nothing else. We shall be counted harsh; this is always the portion of faithfulness. But the name of the Lord is our tower of strength for the last days, as from the beginning.

So Paul warns Timothy in his last epistle, as he looked at the perils of these days (which are still more emphatically true now than they were then); and what is the resource for them? Not tradition, but the written Word of God. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable," etc. It is not teachers, nor godly men raised up, however precious both may be - nothing but Scripture can be a permanent standard of truth.

Be Established in the Present Truth

Recent developments have come to our attention concerning a "hoped-for merged church." This will surely be of interest to many. As to these developments and ideas, the test we need to use is, do they agree with the Word of God? The following is an article entitled, "Toward Unity," published last November in a Midwestern city daily newspaper.

"From many places the reports trickle in - from Rome; from Dayton, Ohio; from other cities, large and small. Progress is being made toward resolving the differences between scores of Christian churches.

"From Rome come reports that the case of Martin Luther, leader of the 'Reformation,' declared a heretic centuries ago by the Roman Catholic Church, is being reconsidered. Since many Protestant churches of today were inspired by Luther, this move must be considered conciliatory.

"In Dayton, the Consultation of Church Union (COCU), consisting of representatives from one third of the Protestant churches in America, to which twenty-three million people belong, has produced an ecumenical document. It is described as a statement of 'emerging theological consensus.'

"Some of the most important Protestant churches in COCU do not recognize bishops as a part of their ministry or governance. Nevertheless, their representatives have accepted the need for defining a place for and the duties of bishops in the hoped-for merged church.

"In the Anglican Church (Church of England) and in individual Episcopalian dioceses there is a feverish concern for unity.... Unity of all churches, and closer contact with Jewish theologians, is a prime goal of the Vatican. The tremendous attendance and enthusiasm at the Ecumenical Conference in Philadelphia this past August showed that not only clergy, but many thousands of people of every major faith are all for it."

Concerning all this, dear brethren, we would ask first of all, is the unity of Christians to be founded on love for the truth or on indifference to it? The answer is surely self-evident. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). And again, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." John 17:17. In this last chapter unity in communion precedes unity in testimony. This is the divine order. We must love the precious Word of God, and the proof of that is obedience to it. On the other side, it is indifference to the truth that characterizes Laodicea, that which Christ threatens to spew out of His mouth.

Beside this the Scriptures tell us the history of the Church - both true and false - and also the proper path for the Christian at all times. For a short time the desire of Christ, "That they all may be one;... that the world may believe" (John 17:21), came to pass at Pentecost when the world saw with wonder the many of one heart and soul, having all things common. But as in previous tests, such as Adam, Noah, the Priesthood, and Nebuchadnezzar, man quickly departed and corrupted himself. The Church was no different, yet there was power during the apostles' days to keep the evil out. But Paul said, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among

Your not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Acts 20:29, 30. How truly and how many times this prophecy of Paul's has been fulfilled! Therefore the many divisions and numerous sects; the sad result of departure from the truth; the enemies' work from without and from within.

We realize, and most do, the need for unity, and that in unity there is strength; but the thing of primary importance is that it be according to God as made known in His Word. Otherwise it can only end in that which is called in Rev. 17, "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots, and Abominations of the Earth." She is also spoken of as the great whore, and the woman that sits upon the beast, and as drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. She is gloriously arrayed and glorifies herself and lives deliciously. This is just the opposite to glorifying Christ and now sharing in His rejection. Finally though, the ten kings hate the whore and make her desolate, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. "Strong is the Lord God who judgeth her" (Rev. 18:8).

The clear exhortation for the child of God is not to join any such union, but rather the reverse. "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Rev. 18:4.

We might add a few comments in closing. All true unity is found in Christ and the one body of which all true believers are members. This truth was established by our Savior and given in the times of the apostles. See Rom. 12:5 and 1 Cor. 12:12 and 13.

Over the years there have been many schisms, departures from this unity; and many sects, so called "churches," have been formed. Now in Christendom there is a call for "unity of all churches." But Christ has not changed, and the truth of the one body has not changed. The exercise should be to return individually in repentance and renewed awareness of the fullness of the truth "once delivered unto the saints." Unity in Christ, therefore, requires separation from, not conglomeration with, the systems set up of men.

One last comment as to those within these systems or sects. Our hearts should go out in love to each dear soul in any of these systems. First, it should go out for their salvation; second, that each of those who are true believers might be brought to see the loveliness of being gathered to Christ the center, by the Holy Spirit, in separation from the systems of men. Far too often our comments appear to attack these souls, when in reality we cannot go along with the systems they are associated with. These are the systems, or sects, which men have devised, often as a result of schism, and entirely apart from the truth of the one body of which Christ is the Head, and all believers are members. May our hearts reach out to help others while we walk the separate path with humbleness.

Bethany

"Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him." John 12:1, 2.

Remember that we are in the closing moments of our Lord's life here. They made Him a supper. Beloved, that should be the goal, the desire of our hearts, to make Him a supper. You know we are so apt to get man and his needs before us, so apt to think of the gospel side of things (and God forbid that I should say anything to discourage interest in the gospel); but you know in the Word of God that worship, God's portion, comes first always. God has the first portion, worship, then service.

In the 2nd chapter of 1 Peter we read about priesthood; we read about holy priests, and we read about royal priests. Holy priests offer the sacrifice of God, the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is worship. Holy priesthood precedes royal priesthood. Royal priesthood is testimony, but let us never forget that God puts the holy priesthood first. Which are we putting first in our lives? We see a sad condition existing in Christendom today. Men are saying that the great thing to be desired, the thing above all other aims in the Christian's life, should be to bring sinners into the good of the gospel; and this thing is repeated so often that a lot of people get to believe that is the truth, that the great goal, the great object, is that men might be saved. But when we search the Word of God, we find repeatedly that God demands His portion first.

In the 4th of John, in that wonderful interview with the woman there by the well, we find the Father as a seeker, God as a seeker. What is He seeking? Is He seeking service? No, He is seeking worshipers, worshipers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. Things have become so confused in Christendom today that the very word worship is little understood. We see on various buildings the announcement that worship will take place at such an hour. We find that the so-called worship consists in ministry such as we are having here this afternoon, but ministry is not worship. Ministry may create worship in the heart, but ministry itself is not worship. In what we have brought before us here, we find the Lord invited into the home of Martha where we have one of the most beautiful examples anywhere in the whole Word of God of a real worshiper. Do we wish to know what a worshiper is? Do we have the desire to be a worshiper? We can learn it here from this little scene at Bethany.

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." John 12:3.

Can you imagine a scene more fitted to the delight of heaven than what we have before us in this third verse? - Christ the center of the scene! Mary, this dear devoted child of God on her knees at His feet again. This is the third time we have found her there. Is she there with a request? Is she there to beseech the Lord about something? Oh, beloved, she is just there to pour out upon those blessed feet the best she had. She had this box of ointment, very precious. We learn from other

scriptures something of the value of it, and I suppose that a conservative estimate would be to say that box of ointment was worth in purchasing power the equivalent of several thousand dollars in American currency today; and yet, nothing was too good for Christ. She was there anointing His feet and wiped His feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Oh, beloved saints of God, there is no odor like that - the odor that comes from the owning of the loveliness of the Person of Christ.

The whole house was filled with the odor - worship ascending up to God. That is what the Father is seeking - worshipers - not service, but worshipers. If we come into His presence as worshipers and dwell there as worshipers, it fills our hearts with the loveliness of Christ; and then we want to go out and tell someone else about the Savior we have found.

What we do for Christ goes on forever. It is multiplied into infinity. Whosoever loves this life shall lose it, but whosoever hates his life in this world for His sake, shall keep it unto life eternal.

The Bread of God

John 6:32-69

There are three positions in which the blessed Lord is presented in the doctrinal portion of this chapter: first, as come down out of heaven to fulfill the will of the Father that sent Him; then, as giving His flesh for the life of the world; and last, as ascending up where He was before. In the first He is the bread of God - not merely the bread He gives, but that which He feeds upon Himself. Now, for the first time, man's path was found opening out in Christ in all its perfection before the Father, whose eye and heart only could enter into it. What perfect dependence, obedience, devoted love to the Father were there! A life governed only by His Father's will in every detail of word and action, with the absolute refusal of every other object but His Father's glory. No wonder the heavens opened to Him and the Father's voice declared His perfect delight in Him. Thus He was the bread, or food, of God's own joy. But how wonderful to know that it was not to be for Himself alone: "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." In His infinite grace the Father would have others enter into His estimation of the Son whom He loved. He was the bread of life; and he that cometh to Him by faith should never hunger or thirst.

This leads us to the second position that the Lord took, that He who was the bread of God might be the bread of life to us.

The more perfection shone out in Him among men, the more the state of every other man came out in His presence. The light shone in darkness; we saw no beauty in Him that we should desire Him. "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" was the answer of the Jews (v. 42) to the gracious revelation that it was the will of Him who sent Him that He should lose nothing of those given Him, and that every one who sees the Son and believes on Him should have eternal life, and be raised up into the proper sphere of that life when the end of the present age had come. This moral incompetency to enter into all that made Him the sealed One (v. 27) of the Father's delight was the last and conclusive proof that there was nothing in us for God, and the absolute necessity of the early sentence of God upon man, "The end of all flesh is come before Me." So that in order that any should eat of the bread come down out of heaven, and not die, but live forever, we read, "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (v. 51); and the essential condition of our having life in Him is that we eat His flesh and drink His blood (v. 53).

Up to this in the Gospel there had been the objective presentation of the life in Him, but now it is the question of our subjective entering into it. This depends upon our having been brought to bow to the judgment of God, not only of our sins, but of all that we are according to the flesh, in His death. It is surely by faith, but having eaten His flesh and drunk His blood [the verbs in verse 53 are of one definitive act] expresses more than this. It is that we have solemnly identified ourselves with Him in the death He endured for us, and which ended before God and for faith all we were as children of Adam. We have, as in the type of the sin offering, laid our hands upon the victim's head, and owned His death to be ours. It is a definite point to which we have to be brought in the

soul's history, never to be gone back from; deliverance from the dominion of sin is found in it. But the eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood is not simply a thing of the past - that we have done with, for now begins the necessity of the habitual feeding upon the death of the Son of man that we may possess eternal life in all its reality as a life of communion with the Father and the Son. As His death is thus before our souls, we are extricated and practically delivered from all that is of the flesh in us, and of man and his world, that the Lord Jesus had to carry down to death under the judgment of God. How could we, in the presence of the infinite sufferings of Gethsemane and the cross, tolerate anything in ourselves of what involved those sufferings for Him who, in such unfathomable love, gave Himself for us?

With His death thus applied to our souls continually there will be nothing to hinder our enjoyment of that life of divine and heavenly relationship which is "eternal" (v. 54). So also it is with abiding in Him, so essential as we know it is to us every moment, from chapter 15. By the Holy Spirit indwelling we know that we are in Him, as He said we should be (chap. 14:20). But dwelling or abiding in Him, as the continuous realization of our being in Him, depends also upon our eating His flesh and drinking His blood, which is true meat and drink. And now verse 57 brings us into what verse 33 had presented to us: "he that eateth Me." It is no longer simply His death, but He Himself personally known as the food and joy of our souls who is the Bread of God. We could only have part in that wonderful Bread by identification with Him in His death, but it is He Himself upon whom we now can feed. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by [or on account of] the Father; so that he that eateth Me, even he shall live [on account of] by Me." He lived for nothing else but the Father; the Father was the only reason of His existence here, the absorbing object of His life. And so, as He rises before our souls in all His perfection, more and more entered into as we feed upon Him, He will become the absorbing Object of our life; we shall live but for Him.

At the close the Lord intimates that He would ascend up where He was before. Of what immense moment for us! For it is thus that all the precious truth has become available for us. The light of the glory in which He is has been shed back on all He was in the lowly, perfect path of His humiliation, and upon the cross upon which God has been infinitely glorified and man's history closed in judgment, so that nothing but Christ should remain before our souls in this blessed communion of divine joy and satisfaction.

May we each know increasingly what it is to eat His flesh and drink His blood, and feed upon Him personally who is the Bread of God.

The Bright Morning Star

What polar star have you to guide you down here? Nothing but the coming of the Lord. The bride has nothing as a future but the coming of Christ. Christians have too much forgotten their proper place, watching through the night for their absent Lord. He cheers them by saying, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Why is it night? Because He is away.

Has the secret been revealed to you that He is the bright and Morning Star, and you are practically waiting for Him? As before the sun rises, before the light of day, He will come and take us up to Himself. There I get my rest in everything because I know He is coming.

On Capital Punishment

One has noticed among some believers an unsettled view of the proper Christian position regarding the current capital punishment issue. Life is so "meaningful" to some that the thought of administering capital punishment to those who have deliberately committed murder is unthinkable. Christianity and the golden rule are thought to be contrary to this practice.

We are living in what the Scriptures refer to as "the last days" (2 Tim. 3:1-9), those days just prior to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. As believers we ought not to be surprised at the chaotic condition of this poor world. We are witnessing the fruits of man's rejection of Christ and His Word. "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course." Psalm 82:5.

As Christians, our only refuge at such a time is the Scripture. Ignorance of it is the root of all our doubts and problems; but a knowledge of His Word brings peace and joy into our hearts as the Holy Spirit illuminates our minds.

Is capital punishment cruel, barbaric, and not suited for civilized man? Let us briefly examine a few scriptures that ought to demonstrate what God has to say about this subject. Is it not blessed to have a source to which to refer, other than our own feelings or some current philosophy?

Following the great flood, man entered into a new dispensation; that is, he was put to another test. Prior to the flood man had no right to take another's life (see Gen. 4:10, 11, 14, 15, 23, 24). But God gave Noah (man) new authority. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man." Gen. 9:6. This means the responsibility for capital punishment arises out of the highest function of government - the protection of human life. Man is not individually to avenge murder, but as a corporate group he is to safeguard human life as a gift of God. This precious gift cannot rightly be disposed of except as God permits. "The powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1).

Some have thought that "thou shalt not kill" (Exod. 20:13) does away with the thought of taking a life through capital punishment. We should note, though, that the Hebrew language uses several words to express the idea "to kill." The verb used here is a special word which can only mean murder, and always indicates intentional slaying.

It is interesting to read also that death was the punishment for over twenty other offenses in the Old Testament, such as adultery, sodomy, having sexual relations with animals, kidnapping, etc. (Exod. 22). However, we must make the difference between those which were restricted to the dispensation of the law, and the law governing capital punishment, which was divinely stated before the law of Moses, and has never been annulled, and is binding in every age of man. The authority of the sword delegated to Noah and his sons as representatives of government, is no more repealed or neutralized by the grace of the Christian revelation than it was by the righteousness of the Mosaic code. For while grace is the central idea in God's scheme for saving sinners by the cross, justice is and must be the foundation of all earthly government, Jewish or

Gentile.

Does the New Testament have anything to say on the subject of capital punishment? In Acts 25:11 we see Paul before Festus, being charged with crimes punishable by death. The great Apostle of grace is saying here, as it were, "If I'm guilty, I insist I die, but if not, I appeal to Caesar." He would not have agreed to such a thing if it had been contrary to the mind of God.

Let us now look at the "government" chapter, Rom. 13 Here we learn that governments are ordained of God, one of His provisions in a wicked world. Notice Rom. 13:4. He who has been given authority "beareth not the sword in vain." In those days the executioner used a sword, and Paul is saying that he is using it for our good and protection.

We praise God for His precious Word. May we have hearts to bow to its authority, and be so saturated with it that it dominates our thinking - that as the Holy Spirit applies it to our hearts and consciences we may know how to stand in this "perilous time" for His glory.

Christ a Reality

One thought pressed on me thirty-five years ago, and that was the thought of reality. Let it be a reality - don't let me follow meteors! Is it, I asked, a real fact, that God's Christ is mine, and that He is now sitting at God's right hand as my accepted sacrifice, and all God's delight is in Him?

Your heart may have to be brought into all sorts of difficulties to find out what it has in Christ - what it is to be connected with the eternal loves of the soul. Is He known to you as the One who is occupied with all your concerns? Do you realize it daily? The thought of His being occupied about us would prevent our being tried with difficulties that spring up. It would make us say, "What! is Christ on the throne of God mine? I, such a poor feeble thing - is He given to me?" Paul found the love of Christ a personal thing it is so. It was a personal love that gave John a place on His bosom, a personal love that drew to Him the poor woman that washed His feet with her tears; and poor things down here understand the power of that love as they go on.

When we see saints like Peter and Paul failing, we find what a poor thing man is at his best estate; but oh, what an unexpected blessing to have to do with a God who cannot fail! And I know that when I pass from earth, I have a God who means to take me up and make of this poor body, a body of glory like that risen Man at His right hand. Come what may, this God has His everlasting hand underneath us.

Christ Our Surety

The Lord Jesus advanced to the cross as knowing that there as our Surety He had to meet God in a manner in which He had never before met Him, and in which He would never meet Him again. There, as One who had taken upon Himself the punishment of our guilt, He had to meet God in the power of unmitigated wrath. The appointed cup of penal suffering was there to be drunk to the very dregs. It was appointed - it was necessary - because of the holiness of God; otherwise atonement could not be made.

The Christian Home

Eph. 5:22 - 6:9

The family is especially dealt with in the epistles which treat of the Church. Those epistles which take up Church order and rule take up also the order and rule of the family; and those epistles which show the Church as the body of Christ, show also how this relationship and the principles it involves affect the family life. Family relationships were instituted by God in Eden, and confirmed after the fall. Christianity does not change their outward character, but infuses into them new and divine principles. The husband is the responsible head of the house, and the mutual obligation subsisting between him and his wife, his children, and his servants, is the subject of the portion now before us. The question is not one of rights on either side, but rather of the way in which each, as having the life of Christ, should exhibit this in his conduct toward the other.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." vv. 22-24. Part of the curse pronounced on the woman at the fall was, "Thy desire shall be [subject] to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16). Christianity confirms this order, but so remodels it that all trace of the curse disappears. The subjection of the believer to the Lord, or of the Church to Christ, is no curse or bondage, and these are now the models of wifely subjection; for she is to be subject to her own husband, "as unto the Lord," and as "the church is subject unto Christ." How beautiful to see a human relationship, and one too which derives a part of its character from the fall, thus transformed into a type of the mystery in which God displays His "manifold wisdom" unto "the principalities and powers in heavenly places."

The subject is expanded in dealing with the other side. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." vv. 25-27. Here, though natural affection is owned, a far higher order of love is brought in, so that the earthly relationship is re-cast, as it were, in a heavenly mold. The past, present, and future love of Christ to the Church are all made to bear on the duty of the husband to his wife. And how beautiful the unfolding of this love is! Christ loved the Church - not only saints, but the Church - and gave Himself for it. It was the "pearl of great price" for which He sold all that He had. Now He watches over it, cleansing it from defilement by the application of His Word. Soon He will present it to Himself in His own beauty, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," the object of His own eternal delight.

And here the order of creation is brought in and made to blend, as it were, with that love of Christ of which it furnishes so beautiful a type. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His

bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." vv. 28-31.

The peculiar mode of Eve's creation out of Adam, both gives marriage a special sanctity, so that the wife is to be cherished as a part of the husband's own being, and furnishes an exquisite type of Christ's relationship with the Church. As Adam was not complete without Eve, so Christ, though Head over all, is not complete without the Church, "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." As Adam fell into a deep sleep, so Christ went into death. As Eve was formed out of Adam, so the Church is quickened with Christ and has His own life. As Adam acknowledged Eve to be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, so does Christ acknowledge the Church. As Adam was bound to care for and cleave to the woman thus formed out of himself, so Christ delights in nourishing and cherishing the Church which is His own body. How wonderfully all that belongs to this divinely instituted relationship is raised by being thus linked up with the tender, watchful love of Christ over the Church!

This, of course, is the grand subject, and therefore the Apostle writes, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Still the relationship of husband and wife is also in his view; so he adds, "Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." vv. 32, 33. Though the believer is not promised his portion in this life, yet he is told that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). We have an illustration here. Who cannot see the happiness that would reign in the house where the relationship of husband and wife was formed on the godly model here furnished!

The subjection of children to their parents is part of God's order as seen in nature; and under the law a special blessing was attached to the observance of the commandment in which this duty was enjoined. Christianity takes up the obligation, but transplants it from natural to divine ground. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Chap. 6:1-3. Thus the obligation of children, as of wives is connected with "the Lord." It is not merely the dictate of nature, though perfectly right, but the acknowledgment of the Lord's claims as represented in the parents. The blessed Lord Himself, who "learned obedience," was the beautiful example of this. Of Him in His lifetime it is recorded that He went with His parents "to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." The law is not here introduced as showing that believers are under it, but as proving the special value which God attached to this duty, so as even to depart from the ordinary character of law by coupling it with a promise which makes known the connection between this duty and earthly blessing.

But the duty is not one-sided. The Apostle adds, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." v. 4. Both parents are to be obeyed, but this admonition is addressed only to the fathers. This may be partly because fathers are more likely to err in the provoking of their children to wrath than mothers; but the principal reason is that the father, as the head of the house, is responsible to God for the bringing up of the children, and he is treated on the ground of this responsibility. This principle, as seen in Eli's case, runs throughout Scripture. It is all the more solemn because under Christianity the children are already holy, as belonging to the house of God; and the obligation is therefore the greater to "bring

them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

The Israelites were holy by birth - not personally, but as belonging to a nation set apart to God - and therefore the fathers were to instruct the children in the law, their then link with God. So Christian parents are to instruct their children as to what becomes the holy character which attaches to them as members of a Christian family.

The Christian Home

Eph. 5:22; 6:9

The next class of household relationships differs from the others in being one instituted by social rather than natural causes. The servants here named were bondsmen. Whether slavery is right or wrong, humane or cruel, is not the point here. Christianity takes men in the social position in which it finds them, and shows how they may live Christ in that place. It is not occupied in remodeling society, but in teaching the believer to exhibit Christ. He was to be subject to the powers that be; and as these authorized slavery, he was to obey the laws in this as in other matters, seeking freedom lawfully if he could, but if not, to be content with his lot. The service rendered under present social conditions differs in its legal basis, but this does not alter the obligations on either side named by the Apostle. No, if there is any difference, the obligation is even stronger; for service rendered for wages should surely be given as cheerfully and performed as thoroughly as service exacted by bondage.

"Servants," therefore, are exhorted to "be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men." vv. 5-7. Here again the obligation is taken out of the range of the old creation and connected with Christ in glory. Like wives and children, the servants are exhorted to render their obedience "as unto Christ." This at once transfers their duties to a higher region than either the legal compulsion of the old system or the legal contract of the present. Even a slave's duties were at once ennobled and sweetened if he could say, I am doing this not for reward or to escape punishment, but to please Christ. It was not to be a question of whether the task imposed was reasonable or unreasonable, light or arduous. Wrong endured, or severe labor performed for Christ's sake, might be cheerfully borne.

How beautifully our Lord Himself furnishes the example of this. He "took upon Him the form of a servant." Though entitled to be free, He submits to tribute lest He should offend them. So the believing servant under the cruelest and most tyrannical treatment, was to show out the life of Christ in him. "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.... For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." 1 Pet. 2:19-21. And as the cheerful and diligent obedience of the servant was the means of showing forth Christ, so any failure in the respect or subjection here enjoined would bring reproach on His name. Hence the Apostle in writing to Timothy said, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed." 1 Tim. 6:1.

Nowhere is the honor of Christ spoken of as bound up with the conduct of the believer so remarkably as in the case of the servant. The very hardships of his lot, the very injustice and

cruelty with which he was liable to be treated, only rendered the power of the life of Christ in him more conspicuous. And before none other is the reward of his conduct so distinctly set: "Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." v. 8. How cheering to the suffering bondsman, to look beyond the drudgery and unrequited labors of his earthly lot, and to know that the faithful toil endured with good will for the Lord's sake here, is not and never will be, forgotten, but will all "be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

And if Christ as the Lord of the inheritance holds out the hope of reward to the servant, so he utters words of warning to the master: "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him." v. 9. "The same things" probably mean what is called in the Colossians, "that which is just and equal." The principle here is the counterpart of that in the last verse. Even a Christian master might forget that social distinctions though recognized and sanctioned on earth, have no existence in Christ's judgment. Master and servant will all answer to Him. To the one whose low position might cause discouragement He holds out, therefore, the prospect of reward for faithful service; to the one whose high position might lead to oppression, He holds out the judgment that will follow an abuse of power. Though the law might give the injured servant no redress, the master was reminded of another tribunal before which he must stand, and in which his conduct to his servant would be judged, not according to man's laws, but according to the estimate of Him that is holy, Him that is true. Thus Christ is made the standard of everything in the Christian's walk. Whether as wife or husband, as child or parent, as bondsman or master, the rule is that having Christ's life, the walk of Christ is to be shown forth in the believer's ways. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."

Christ's Reign

This world is not to remain forever the sporting place and playground of the devil. That will not be allowed forever. The Son of David will yet have His place in it, and His glory too, as its ruler, and the world will then be altered. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain" (Isa. 11:9). There is a time coming when Christ will be the Prince of Peace. He has declared positively that this is not at the present time. "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division," etc. That is, this is the time when the bringing in the light awakens the passions of men; and until Christ's second coming puts them down, they continue their raging.

And Christians now have to take up the cross and follow Him. Do you think if Christ were reigning, His followers would only have the cross? Why, they would have the crown. We are positively told that our part is the cross. We must now take it up every day. But, when Christ reigns, that will not be the part of His people. He will "come to be glorified in His saints"; and a glorious place they will get when He comes to reign.

Come - Follow

"Come and see" (John 1:39). "Follow Thou Me" (John 21:22).

It is not a little remarkable that the first and last utterances of the Lord in the Gospel of John consist of three words each. The first recorded word that falls from His lips in this Gospel is the most welcome of all words as sounding from Him - "Come." Welcome and winning word indeed! But the lips that say "Come," also say "Follow." To be a truehearted subject of grace is also to become a truehearted follower. The "come" of grace is balanced by the "follow" of authority. "Come and see" and "Follow thou Me" form the perfect balance.

The Conference at Jerusalem

It is often questioned whether the prohibitions against eating blood, in Gen. 9:4, Lev. 17:10-14; and Acts 15, are binding on Christians. The conference at Jerusalem (Acts 15) settles for us the question of abstaining from blood. It does not take up Lev. 17, but the command to Noah as to this. The question to be settled was, Could the Gentiles become Christians without first becoming Jews? Amos 9 is cited for the sake of the words, "And all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called." It is not that the prophecy was fulfilled, but that the name of the Lord could be called on them as Gentiles.

Jerusalem herself gives up the title to impose the law on the nations, and the Apostle of the circumcision uses the remarkable expression, "We shall be saved, even as they" (v. 11); that is, through grace - the manner in which a Gentile is dealt with, mercy being God's way, through grace, with the Jew (compare Eph. 2:4-8, etc.). When the "apostles and elders and brethren" write their decision, in verses 23 to 29, they embody in it those "necessary things" which were opportune and right for Christians to observe. First, the unity of the Godhead was to be maintained, in contrast to the "idols" of the heathen. Second, that life belonged to Him - they were to abstain from "blood, and from things strangled." Third, the marriage tie was sacred and to be kept pure. In fact, they go back to what was right and ordered of God in creation, coupling it with those things I name; not as enacting new laws, but giving what was right to be observed in the midst of an evil world.

Thus, what was enacted in Gen. 9:4 is held good in Christianity. I do not think therefore we are exempt, but, bound, as in all things, to do the will of the Lord.

Consider Him

"Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Heb. 12:3.

He was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He was led to the brow of the hill by men filled with wrath, that they might cast Him down headlong. He was led away by Annas; led away to Caiaphas; led into the counsel of the elders and the chief priests and scribes; led to Pontius Pilate, and into the hall of judgment. And then He, our Lord Jesus Christ, was led as a sheep to the slaughter; led away to be crucified! Never once was He gently led. F.R.H.

When the storm is raging high,

When the tempest rends the sky,

When my eyes with tears are dim,

Then, my soul, "consider Him."

When my plans are in the dust,

When my dearest hopes are crushed,

When is past each foolish whim,

Then, my soul, "consider Him."

When with dearest friends I part,

When deep sorrow fills my heart,

When pain racks each weary limb,

Then, my soul, "consider Him."

When I track my weary way,

When fresh trials come each day,

When my faith and hope are dim,

Then, my soul, "consider Him."

Cloud or sunshine, dark or bright,

Evening shades, or morning light,

When my cup flows o'er the brim,

Then, my soul, "consider Him."

Covetousness

The natural tendency of the heart often needs to be met with that word, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness" (Luke 12:15). It is the love of possession. One came to the Lord saying, "Master, Speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." The heart wanted to keep it. If love of the world or covetousness gets in among the saints, it is an insidious thing and most difficult to meet because it is often not open to discipline; and yet, if covetousness slips into the heart, it checks the power of Christ over the soli' and conscience, and eats out the practical life of the Christian, and his soul is withered, withered, withered. It may be checked by the power of God coming in but this covetous care about earthly things is so subtle that, while there is nothing on which to lay the hand, the practical power of Christian life in the soul is gone, though of course I need hardly say, eternal life can never be lost in those who once had it.

Deep Plowing: Present Day Evangelism

There was nothing superficial in the gospel of Paul. His preaching was always searching. It did not skim the surface nor heal the hurt slightly by saying, "Peace, peace," when there was none. It did not call for a mere profession of faith nor a dead intellectual assent; no, it laid the conscience bare, and put its finger on sin. It dealt not only with overt acts of evil, but with the corrupt nature from which they sprang. It left no stone unturned. It was influential and resulted either in its deliberate rejection as a thing intolerable, or in its reception as a thing precious beyond comparison. It was either a warrant of death or "the power of God unto salvation." This is true of the gospel as such always; but in Paul we find the fullest and most abundant testimony to Christianity, and therefore it is well to refer to him as our model.

Thus in Acts 26:20 we have a summary of his method and mode of work. He "showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." This is doubtless a fair sample of his style.

Three weighty truths burdened his soul and lay at the bottom of his preaching -

Repentance

Turning to God

Works meet for repentance

And these three truths, observe, were urged by him everywhere and on all classes. Unto them of Damascus first, where he first saw the light, and where in the Jewish synagogue he preached that "Jesus is the Son of God"; then at Jerusalem, not yet finally judged, but having at least a semblance of God's favor and privilege; then in Judea; and last to the Gentiles, ignorant of God and given over to sin. Everywhere and alway the same appeal comes from his lips for the simple reason that one response is incumbent on all.

Repentance lies at the bottom of all true religion. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3), said the Lord when on earth.

You may as well expect to see a house without a foundation as a saved soul without repentance. Such a thing does not exist.

Granted that "all have sinned," then all must repent. Granted that "there is none righteous," then all must repent.

It is an absolute necessity. It is a thing that cannot be avoided, nor can a substitute for it be found. Each one must for himself own his personal guilt and judge his evil condition, although repentance, however deep, is not our Savior, but Christ Jesus our Lord.

Repentance implies self-judgment in the presence of God. It is a change of mind in reference to myself, to others, and to God - such a change of mind that humbles me in the dust, putting me in my true and proper place before Him. I say then, like the prodigal, "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Oh, the unbounded value of this full admission of total demerit! If absolutely necessary, it is also profoundly blessed; if deeply humbling, it is also divinely elevating. It puts the soul right with God; it anticipates and averts His judgment of it, and acknowledges His holiness by a true confession of its own guilt.

But is there merit in repentance? None. It is one of the activities of faith - the initial, dawning activity of the Spirit of God as He operates on the conscience. It is the repudiation of all merit. Else why called repentance? An eternal difference exists between repentance and "doing penance" - the one is self-condemnatory, but the other is self-exalting. The one is seen in the offering of Abel, the other in that of Cain.

Turning to God is an act of the soul that, though subsequent to repentance, is yet prior to the production of works meet for it. It is the outward and upward glance of faith that lets in the sunshine. It is the completion of repentance - the obverse of the coin - while the works are the music of its ring and the witness of its genuineness. "Turning to God" is confronting a living Person.

Philosophy turns you to a thing, perhaps a good thing. It may make a drunkard turn to temperance, an impure man to chastity; but Christianity turns you, whatever you are, to God. Yes, to God, and to nothing short of God. If thus brought to God, works meet for repentance are natural.

Works meet for repentance. In these works we find the fruit growing on the tree. Anyone can tell that the tree lives and is healthy because of the crop it is bearing. Its life is developed in fruit. If there were no fruit, the fruit tree had better be cut down as a cumberer of the ground. But there is fruit. It is the necessary evidence of the life. The fruit does not produce the life, but the life the fruit. You might decorate the tree with fruit, but that would not give it life.

Further, if the tree be corrupt, the fruit is corrupt too; but the good fruit declares the nature of the tree to be good also.

Legality was once quite widespread, but levity is fast gaining ground as legality disappears, and preaching that pleases the ear is preferred to that which deals with sin. It is well, therefore, to listen to the words of the Apostle to the Gentiles, and to be reminded of that repentance, that turning to God, and those works meet for repentance, that threefold testimony which he preached so faithfully in his day.

The Disappointments of Life: This Thing Is From Me

1 Kings 12:21

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

Hast thou never thought that all which concerns thee, concerns Me also? He that toucheth thee toucheth the apply of Mine eye (Zech. 2:8). Thou hast been precious in Mine eyes; that is why I take a special interest in thine upbringing. When temptation assails thee, and the "enemy comes in like a flood," I would wish thee to know that "This thing is from Me." I am the God of circumstances. Thou hast not been placed where thou art by chance, but because it is the place I have chosen for thee. Didst thou not ask to become humble? Behold, I have placed thee in the very place where this lesson is to be learned. It is by thy surroundings and thy companions that the working of My will is to come about.

Hast thou money difficulties? Is it hard to keep within thine income? "This thing is from Me." For I am He that possesseth all things. I wish thee to draw everything from Me. My riches are illimitable (Phil. 4:19). Put My promise to the proof, so that it may not be said of thee, "Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord thy God."

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

Has some friend disappointed thee? One to whom thou hadst opened thine heart? "This thing is from Me." I have allowed this disappointment that thou mightest learn that the best Friend is Jesus. He preserves us from falling, fights for us in our combats; yea, the best Friend is Jesus. I long to be thy confident.

Has someone said false things of thee? Leave that, and come closer to Me, under My wings, away from the place of wordy dispute, for I will bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday (Psalm 37:6). Have thy plans been all upset? Art thou crushed and weary? "This thing is from Me." Hast thou made plans and then coming asked Me to bless them? I wish to make thy plans for thee. I will take the responsibility, for it is too heavy for thee; thou couldst not perform it alone (Exod. 18:18). Thou art **BUT AN INSTRUMENT** and **NOT AN AGENT**.

Hast thou desired fervently to do some great work for Me? Instead of that thou hast been laid on one side, on a bed of sickness and suffering. "This thing is from Me." I was unable to attract thine attention whilst thou wast so active. I wish to teach thee some of My deep lessons. It is only those who have learned to wait patiently who can serve Me. My greatest workers are sometimes those

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

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

Do I Lack Rest? Part 1

"Come unto Me,... and I will give you rest."

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me;... and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matt. 11.

Faith knows the Lord Jesus exalted to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, as the One in whom all fullness dwells, unto whom all power is given in heaven and earth, seated on the throne, the orderer of and ruler over all. There is He blessed, and blessed forever. But it is altogether another place in which we see Him stand in this chapter - despised and rejected of all those unto whom He had presented Himself in the name of Jehovah. And there too He is blessed, and blessed for us.

John the Baptist - "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" - even he seems doubting.

Israel - "Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented" - equally displeased with John and with Jesus, content neither with law nor with grace. Men do not like righteousness; that is too strict for them. Neither like they grace; that is too free. They would have part of one and part of the other.

Again. If we look at the "cities wherein most of His mighty works were done" - "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tiro and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tiro and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you" - we find them worse than any other. So here we see the Lord Jesus rejected on every hand.

It is a solemn thought that we are "unto God a sweet savor of Christ... in them that perish," as well as "in them that are saved." His testimony rejected, the soul of Jesus finds its rest in God. He had done God's will; the name of God had been glorified; there was all the full consciousness of this. Therefore, what blessed repose of soul! Nowhere do we find the Lord Jesus rising more above the power of circumstances, rejoicing more in spirit, than here. His soul, in the midst of this weary world, needed rest, needed repose; and it found that which it needed in submitting to the will of God.

"At that time" - after and amid all the rejection - the Lord Jesus "answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." vv. 25, 26. He bowed to the righteous sovereignty of God.

Now I believe this would ever be the position of soul in the saint when walking in communion with God. Assuredly it is the right spirit because it is the recognition of God's ordering "all things after the counsel of His own will." But then how different from the petulance of many of us!

Jesus, when rejected, could still rest in the sovereignty of God. If we witness our testimony rejected; our wishes disappointed; our motives misunderstood; trial coming when we least expected it, from Christians, perhaps from our own family, from those whom we have sought to serve; then is the time to bow to the righteous sovereignty of God, and to say, "I thank Thee, O Father,... for so it seemed good in Thy sight." O dear friends, if our souls knew a little more of the marvelous mercy vouchsafed to any of us, in God's having revealed Jesus, quickened us when dead in trespasses and sins, put forth the arm of His power on our behalf, we should not be wasting our time, as is now too frequently the case, in vain murmurings and regrets. We should be enabled to say, "I thank Thee, O Father,... for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

Beloved, this is most blessed; there is in it the recognition of the "good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"; there is no reasoning here. In Jeremiah we find complaint, cursing the day in which he was born; in Habakkuk, argument; in Job, self-vindication; but here there is nothing of the sort; it is the simple subjection to the "will of God," as being the best thing possible. "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

What "seemed good" in the Father's sight, was good in the sight of Jesus. It was ever so. "Lo, I come... to do Thy will, O God." Now this is resignation. It is not resignation merely to bow to that which we cannot escape; true resignation recognizes a thing to be good and fitting because it is the will of God, however trying, however painful to ourselves. "I thank Thee."

There is another blessed truth. When Jesus felt Himself to be rejected by all about Him, He said, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." Here the Lord Jesus stands blessedly, in utter rejection by man, but "all things" given unto Him of God.

Beloved, did you ever find, when your own wills have been thwarted, when there has been self-denial, and the bowing of the will to God, something opened to the soul in blessing which it had never known before? It is habitually and practically true that "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

As a matter of fact, Jesus is here the rejected One - rejected of the world - but as the consequence of this, He is the exalted One of the Father. And now He can tell forth, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." Although the world knew Him not, the Father knew Him; although the world delighted not in Him, the Father delighted in Him; although He was not precious to the world, He was precious to the Father.

Again, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." I find that the Lord Jesus Christ, by the knowledge of the Father in His own soul, was supported all through His rejection, and now He stands forth as able to "reveal" the Father's name to others. The Father is only known by the revelation of the Son. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

If you are of the world, you will not want to know that name which Jesus came to manifest. If the world is your portion, you will not want to know that name which was the portion of Jesus when the world had rejected Him. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh,

and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Do I Lack Rest? Part 2

I would speak a little on the last verses of Matt. 11 and endeavor to bring out some of the blessed truth contained in them.

There is a marked distinction between what is said here of Jesus giving rest, and our finding rest - a distinction of much importance. He does not tell me to do anything in order that He might give me rest; it is simple, "Come unto Me." But in order to my finding rest, He says, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Practical obedience is made necessary.

It is of great moment to see the connection these things have one with the other; the saints often lose the present practical enjoyment of the rest which Jesus has given them, because of not taking heed to it.

In the consciousness of the possession of "all things" - all things being delivered unto Him of the Father, all power given unto Him in heaven and earth, all judgment committed unto Him, everything (for there is not one single thing which the Father has not given into the hands of Jesus as the rejected One of the world) His - He says, "Come unto Me."

What a most blessed connection there is then between Jesus receiving "all things" and His asking us to come unto Himself. He does not say, "Come unto Me" as the despised and rejected One merely; no, "Come unto Me" as the One "despised and rejected" indeed "of men," yet having in Himself all that men eagerly seek after, all that they count estimable, everything that is an object of human ambition. He is worthy "to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." There is in Him whom the world has rejected, not only everything that is suited to our need as sinners, but that also which can satisfy the utmost desire of our hearts; therefore it is, "Come." This is most blessed; it shows forth the grace of the heart of Jesus. When we find Him as the "rejected One turning round saying, "Come unto Me" - "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" - we learn grace indeed!

Coming unto Him, believing on His name, is all the great secret of the rest He offers. The self-righteous multitude, the scribes, the Pharisees, the lawyers, had rejected Him; but Jesus knew that there were some standing around, weary, heavy laden ones, trying to get rid of their burden of guilt in vain. The law could never give them relief; the law could never take away their sin. To these He turns; "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Again, there are those who had had the experience of trying to find rest in society, in friends, in the world, and to them He says, "Come unto Me." Rest, true rest, is received in simply coming to Jesus. What is it that my soul wants? "Come unto Me" is the invitation; all that it needs is in the hands of Jesus - pardon of sin, eternal life, rest, whatever it may desire - all is provided for it there.

I will here notice the order presented. The Lord Jesus does not tell us to find rest until He has first given us rest. I believe many have inverted this order, and have sought to take the yoke before they were bidden. He knows exactly what the sinner needs (as also did the Father who has

delivered all things into His hands) - needs simply as a gift, not to be earned, not to be deserved, but to meet Him at once - a free gift. I do press this: until there is simple rest to the soul by coming unto Jesus, in any way to act as a Christian, whether it be in worship or in service, will be bondage, for they that are in the flesh cannot please God. We must be set at rest about ourselves before we can think of acting for God. I must have rest in my soul before I can act as a saint, before I can take upon me the "yoke" of Christ. Ere I can bear His "burden" I must have got rid of my own; I must have left it with Him.

When not coming to Jesus to receive rest at His hands - a free gift - I come to Him as a taskmaster, and thus only get a double burden instead of finding that blessed rest for my soul, wherein I, a pardoned sinner, can rest and delight; and God, a holy God, can delight also.

Jesus is the true Sabbath wherein God has infinite delight. And He is the soul's most blessed Sabbath also. He has been the obedient One - "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Man has crucified Jesus, but God has raised Him from the dead. and now God publishes His name as the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved. He has done God's will; therefore all things are delivered unto Him of the Father, and He says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Beloved friends, I again repeat it: Jesus does not ask us to take His "yoke" or His "burden" upon us until we have laid aside our own. Until I am free in spirit through the knowledge of the work of Jesus on the cross, I am not able to serve aright.

Whatever we may be in our own estimation or in the estimation of others, though despised and rejected of all around, still, as having come to Jesus, "All things are yours," not one thing withheld from us. For Jesus is the great gift of God, and in Him is treasured up every other gift - righteousness, life, peace, everything.

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Jesus had borne the "burden," Jesus had borne the "yoke" Himself, and therefore He could say, "Learn of Me." I am not speaking about the burden of our sins; the Lord Jesus came also to learn "obedience by the things which He suffered." Jesus was the One who had found out all the bitterness of rejection and scorn, and yet could say, "Even so, Father"; therefore it is, "Learn of Me." In Isa. 50:10 we read, "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned"; therefore He had "the tongue of the learned," and knew how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He can tell us how He has borne the yoke Himself, going lower and lower, and He can say, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Beloved, if Christ Jesus found the yoke to be easy, and the burden light - if He could say, I have overcome, how was it? - by bowing to the yoke. And how do we overcome? always by enduring, never by endeavoring to altar circumstances, never by seeking rest here. Every man naturally thinks to overcome circumstances of trial by altering them, but this is not the way with the disciple

of Jesus. When the soul of the saint complains of being ill at ease, and he is seeking practical peace and rest by endeavoring to alter the circumstances in which he is placed, he is not having that peace in Jesus which Himself has promised - "in the world ye shall have tribulation," but in Me "peace." We often speak very foolishly one to another, and seem to think that change of circumstances will afford peace. But change of circumstances merely does not affect the peace of the soul at all. Let us listen to that word, "Learn of Me." Jesus did not alter circumstances; the cup did not pass from Him. No! He bowed, and said, "Not My will, but Thine be done."

There are but two ways in which to act; we must either fight our way through the world, or endure. Now I read, God "will render to every man according to his deeds:... unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish"; and on the contrary, "to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." Here I learn patient continuance in well doing - endurance is the great characteristic of the saint. That is the path of glory and virtue; that is the path that Jesus trod; that is the "yoke" He bore - He endured, and He found it most blessed to do so. Jesus overcame by patient continuance in well doing, and He says, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Not the rest of the fretful, impatient saint who is always trying to alter the circumstances around, but the rest of Jesus - "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

I come to Jesus as a heavy laden sinner, He gives me rest, and He does not take away that which He has given - rest is my everlasting portion. But then I find myself here, still in the midst of a trying world, exposed to the temptations and wiles of the devil, and having an evil heart of unbelief myself. Now we would desire that all in us and about us were already as it will be by-and-by when Satan is chained, but it is not so. We may fret and be angry and disappointed because it is not; but if God does not choose to alter the character of either the flesh, the devil, or the world, it is no use to fret. "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Faith says, This is the path God has chosen for me to tread. Rest is found in the denial of my own will and in following Jesus, not in seeking to alter circumstances, but in bowing the head and saying, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." The Lord Jesus Himself found this second character of rest in becoming obedient unto the "yoke" put upon Him, and then, as One who had had the experience of it, I hear Him saying, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." This "rest" is a complete contrast to the restlessness which characterizes the walk of some saints. And why? There is, perhaps, from a desire of prominence, the going out into a public path of service, instead of living in that of home duties, where God would have them to adorn the doctrine they profess. Hence this constant restlessness. They get uneasy, disappointed, discouraged, not settled here, not settled there, but ever disquiet.

A Christian should go on unaffected by circumstances in the path of practical obedience to the will of God. There, and therein alone, is the practical rest found (for it is practical, experimental rest of which I am now speaking); when I am trying to have my own will and go on my own way, I do not find this rest.

The two things act and react one upon the other; very often we find that a saint has lost peace of soul - the blessed joy he had in knowing his sins were put away forever by the blood of Jesus, and

the possession of eternal life - and what is the cause? In many cases it is because he has not been bearing the burden of Christ, but walking in the path of fleshly activity and restlessness. His peace has thus become disturbed, and he is even tempted to doubt if he be a child of God. They do act and react in a manner and to a degree of which we are little aware. It is very wretched for a saint of God to be always questioning whether he indeed be a saint, instead of walking on in the path of healthy service.

There is still another thing that I would desire to notice briefly, and that is the great basis of Christian humility. I mean that humility which a saint has because he is a saint, and not because he is a sinner. A sinner saved by grace ought indeed to be humble; but the humility which a saint has because he is a saint and an heir of glory is of a much deeper kind than that which is occasioned by the discovery of sin. Nothing will bring a soul so low, and make him willing to serve another in the meanest of service, as the consciousness of his standing before God. Mark the Lord Jesus Christ here: He stands forth in the conscious possession of all things - "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." And yet He says, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Can you put these two together? I believe you can; the soul of the really instructed saint discerns their needful connection. The Lord Jesus, in conscious possession of all things, could afford to humble Himself. What was it that enabled Him to do so but His real greatness, because God was caring for Him? - "Which thing is true in Him and in you." Nothing enables us to go and wash the saints' feet, to lay ourselves down to be trampled on, but the knowledge of our real greatness; we can then afford to be humbled; we can then afford to come down and minister to others, instead of wanting others to minister to us. A child of God needs not anything to add to his dignity, because of the dignity which is given him of God; he has all dignity, "all things" in Christ. This is the real power of truly humbling ourselves to serve others. That which will enable us to put ourselves lower than anything is the consciousness that "all things are yours;... and we are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

Well, I believe we shall find this real and abiding peace and rest to our souls in taking the "yoke" of Christ, in not "minding high things, but going along with the lowly" (Rom. 12:16; J.N.D. Trans.), in willingness to serve all saints - "If any man will be great among you, let him become the servant of all." "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

It is one of the happiest things to be thus a learner in the school of Christ.

The Holy Spirit, whose office and delight is to bring before the soul the Lord Jesus as our example, never does so without grounding us first in the faith of the work that He has done for us on the cross. But if there be a place of real blessing for the servant, it is that of being put in the place of his Master. He is what He is in Himself; we are what we are in Him.

Beloved, remember, if there is restlessness instead of rest, I would say, Is not something of your will, your own will, at work, and not the "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight"?

Thoughts on Ecclesiastes

From two opposite points of view is life on earth generally regarded by mankind. The one half view it as a prospect opening out before them; the other half take a retrospective survey of all they have passed through. Like the cloudless morning of a long summer's day does it appear to one just emerging from childhood, as radiant with hope he starts forth on his journey to realize the dream of his boyhood. Like the gloomy end of a winter's day does it appear to many a one who has reached the verge of that span ordinarily allotted to man on earth, as chastened and bowed down, it may be, with the remembrance of failures, the old man travels on to the tomb. Each has formed an estimate of what life here is, but the one speaks of what he hopes for, and the other tells of that which he has found. A man's idea of a road he has not yet traveled, will often turn out to be wrong; so youth's estimate of life is generally fallacious. Can we trust to one who has traveled the road himself to give us a just idea of what life on earth really is? Each one can tell us of what he has found, and may seek to indoctrinate us with his own idea; but the picture will be differently colored according to the trials or joys each has met with by the way. It will be but the experience of an individual after all.

Man wants something more. Where shall he find it? The wisdom of the ancients cannot supply it; the researches of those who have lived in our day cannot furnish us with it. It needs one gifted with real wisdom to estimate it; it needs one able to search diligently into the things of earth to discover it. One, and only one, of the children of Adam, has been competent for the task, and he has undertaken to perform it. What David, the man after God's own heart, could not have accurately delineated, that Solomon his son could and did; and the book of Ecclesiastes is the utterance of the Preacher, dictated by the Spirit of God, to provide man authoritatively from God, but also experimentally by the wisest of men, with a just estimate of what life here below for a child of Adam really is. Endowed by God with a measure of wisdom surpassing all before him, "For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol" (1 Kings 4:31), and never equaled by any that have come after him, king in Jerusalem, possessed of wealth beyond any monarch the world has ever seen ("silver... was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon"), all that wealth could purchase, all that power could command, all that wisdom could search out, he could enjoy and understand. "What," then, "can the man do that cometh after the king?" "Who can eat, or who else can hasten [or enjoy] hereunto, more than I? Eccles. 2:12, 25.

This was no idle boast. A man of pleasure, a votary of science, the ruler over kings, meting out justice to his subjects, answering all the hard questions of the Queen of Sheba, fertile in invention, diligent in study, rich in all that constituted the wealth of a nomad, pastoral, or settled, and highly civilized people - what source of pleasure was sealed up to him? what field of knowledge on earth was kept from him? Of all the pleasures that man can revel in, he had drunk deep, while at the same time he investigated the works of God, and learned those laws by which the life and order of the universe are regulated. And, when we speak of Solomon's wisdom, we must remember it was not mere genius as people speak, nor the fruit of matured study and diligent attention; but God

gave him wisdom and knowledge besides riches, wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings that had been before him, neither shall any after him have the like (2 Chron. 1:12). Such was the one appointed to depict faithfully what the life on earth of a fallen creature is, and only can be, as One and One alone who has trod this earth as man, has rightly and fully exhibited what man should be. David's son describes the one; David's Lord has set forth the other.

The book of Ecclesiastes then is of great value and might profitably be studied by men of the world in our day. Its writer had no reason to bear a grudge against the world; as men would say, It had used him well, conceding him his place, paying him due honor, and rendering him full homage to his marvelous wisdom. For "King Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year." 2 Chron. 9:22-24.

Competent then surely to tell us what life is, what has he to say of it? how does he describe it? "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Eccles. 1:2. Were these the words of a disappointed man whose hopes had been cruelly crushed and himself roughly treated by the way, none could wonder at such a commencement. But these are the words of the most prosperous, humanly speaking, of men the world has ever witnessed. "Vanity of vanities" - a mere breath, a vapor passing over the earth, short-lived in its existence - such is the recorded experience of the son of David, king in Jerusalem, and that not of some things, but of all. "All is vanity," "saith the Preacher." And here he takes a title not elsewhere met with outside this book - Preacher. He would collect those about him who were desirous to hear, and instruct them, for such is the meaning of the term. So, while other portions of Scripture treat of the future and the path of the righteous on earth, this addresses itself to all whose hearts are in the world, pursuing the occupations of life, and tells them what they really are, as the king's son has discovered by his own experience, and has recorded by the pen of inspiration for the instruction of all who will hearken to him.

"What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?" He takes up the diligent, well-occupied man, toiling away, the man who finds plenty to do and is happy in doing it, thoroughly engaged in the business of life. But why this cry of the Preacher who "sought to find out acceptable words" (chap. 12:10)? And why does he view things so mournfully? The secret comes out. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever." The earth abides; man does not; hence the question that needs no answer, "What profit," etc.

And here we are furnished with a view of death of which it is well for man to be reminded. Death is the wages of sin, but it is not viewed in this aspect in Ecclesiastes. It is not the reason of its entrance into the world that Solomon dilates on, but its presence here as a worm at the root of the tree of pleasure. (Chap. 2:15; 3:19, 20; 5:15; 6:6; 9:3.) It mars pleasure, it chills enjoyment, for it cuts off man just when he would sit down after years of toil to reap the fruit of his labor. How different was the prospect of Adam ere he fell! How different will be the experience of saints during the Millennium, and of men on the new earth! But now to man, feeling the consequences of the fall, death is the great marplot blasting all his hopes. What takes place after death is another matter; other scriptures set that forth. This book regards death from this side of the grave, and

shows how it effects a severance between man and the fruit of all his labor which he thinks he is just about to reap. And the misery of it is just this: man has labored for years and looks naturally to enjoy what he, not others, has amassed, but finds death comes in and takes him away, so he leaves all the fruit of his labor to be enjoyed by another. "There is a man whose labor is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not labored therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil." Chap. 2:21.

What a trouble then is death - an unwelcome visitor which none can keep out of his house. It comes unbidden, at an unseasonable time in man's eyes, and strips its victim of everything; for "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath labored for the wind?" Chap. 5:15,16. And whatever his position on earth, all finally go to one place (chap. 6:6) - the rich, the poor, the wise, the fool, the righteous, the wicked are found at last with the untimely birth which has never seen the sun. And death, the great leveler of all ranks, reduces man to a level below himself, even to that of the beasts; "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go into one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." Chap. 3:19,20. With the thread of man's life thus unrolling before him, at one end of it his exit from the womb, at the other end his exit from the world by death, all that is seen being the transient existence of a mortal born to die, we can understand the reason of that cry, "What profit hath a man," etc.

But if death deprives a man of the enjoyment of the fruits of his toil, his life and all that surrounds him speaks of ceaseless and reiterated labor. The work begun is never perfected. Things in heaven and things on earth proclaim this. "The sun ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose, going toward the south, and turning again to the north" (thus some connect verses 5 and 6). Each day the work is done, only to be repeated again the next day. Each year, the course it has traversed is traversed again.

"The wind," too "whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits." The rivers are ever running to the sea, "yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again," or perhaps better, "unto the place where the rivers go, thither they turn to go." "All things are full of labor; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing."

Thus nature would teach him, if he regarded it aright, that here, as yet, no abiding rest can be enjoyed. Life is a busy scene. What has been will be, and there is nothing new under the sun. And to complete the picture of vanity, "there is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after." The Obliviousness in Solomon's days of what had gone before was not a feature peculiar to his time. It has, it will, characterize man in all ages. What profit then is there in the labor of man? What has been done will be done again, and what has been effected will be forgotten by the generations which may come after.

With this as the preface to his book, the Preacher proceeds to show that he writes not from hearsay, nor culls the wisdom of others, but has tried for himself what life under the sun is for one

of the human race. (Chap. 1:12-2:26.)

He set himself absolutely to the task of searching out by wisdom all things that are done under the sun. In this he made good use of that wonderful gift God had bestowed on him. He beheld them all, "And behold," he writes, "all was vanity and vexation of spirit." Man may see the defects, be conscious of the want, but he cannot supply it. What a condition to be in! Such is man's condition on earth as one who has departed from God. He must feel keenly, if he feels at all, how bitter are the results of turning from the living and true God. He sees what is crooked, discerns what is wanting, but cannot put things straight or supply that which is lacking. "All the foundations of the earth are out of course" are the words of Asaph. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit" is the experience of the king's son. And this, we must remember, is not the experience of the sinner reaping the fruit of what he has sown, but one of the old creation (though a sinner himself) feeling the ruin and disorder sin has brought on the Earth

Thoughts on Ecclesiastes

As originally created by God, man was meant to find unalloyed delight on earth, with a nature capable of enjoyment, a mind capable of instruction and expansion, and a frame capable of exertion; and everything around him would have ministered to his pleasure, or have afforded opportunities for the full development of his faculties. Is that the case now? Let us listen to the words of the Preacher again: "I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Chap. 1:16-18. This is human experience, yet not the experience which of necessity a man must have, but the experience of all men who are still suffering under the consequences of the fall. And however great man may be on earth, whatever be the powers of his mind or the yearnings of his heart, he cannot as a child of Adam get beyond what is here described. Like some fair ruin with here and there traces of exquisite workmanship still remaining by which we can contrast the evident design of the architect with the present condition of the building, so we can discern in man's feelings and powers what he was originally capable of, while compelled to own he is but a wreck of that noblest of God's works of creation.

But whence did he acquire that experience which enabled him to pronounce such a verdict on all the pursuits of men under the sun? He tells us: "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting [or guiding] mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and

that of all sorts [for, as it might be rendered, and perhaps more correctly, 'wife and wives,' that is, many wives]. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my portion of all my labor." Chap. 2:1-10.

Such was the wide range of pleasures, intellectual and carnal, that he explored. Nothing was withheld of any joy; but while entering so keenly into all that he describes, he tells us his wisdom remained with him. Fully competent then was he from personal experience, and from the wisdom which never forsook him, to estimate aright what all this was worth. Would not such a one be satisfied with what this life afforded? If others less favored were disappointed, he at least had his fill of everything he desired. And, having drunk deeply of all that could be indulged in, he has left on record what he found it all to be. "Behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." He discerned the value of wisdom; it "excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness"; but to the fool, as well as to the wise, death comes, and after death the fool and wise are forgotten; yes, the wise man dies as the fool. Hence he hated life, and he hated all the labor which he had labored under the sun, because he must leave it to the man that shall be after him; and who knows, he mournfully asks, whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? History answers the question and illustrates forcibly the vanity of all things which he felt so keenly. Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men that had stood before Solomon his father, and lost by his act of folly the allegiance of the ten tribes. He forsook also the Lord after three years of his reign had elapsed, witnessed the invasion of Shishak king of Egypt, and lost the treasures Solomon had amassed. The shields of gold went to swell the coffers of Egypt, and Rehoboam had to substitute shields of brass in their stead. From speaking of himself, Solomon turns to others and, taking a survey of all things done under the sun, declares all is vanity.

Of wealth he speaks. It has its use. Money is a defense (chap. 7:12); it is God's gift; yet how often do men feel the vanity of it all. Coveted, toiled after as the one great good, the man acquires wealth, fills his coffers, and yet is unsatisfied. If childless, he may desire offspring, but children are God's gift, not to be purchased by money. If he loves silver, he will not be satisfied with it (chap. 5:10). How can things of earth really satisfy an immortal spirit? If he feasts his eyes with his money today, it may vanish away shortly, and he be left with an heir - his own child - born to inherit beggary (vv. 13, 14). Again, if he has prospered to the last and his riches have not fled away, he must leave them; for as he entered the world, so must he leave it. Death summons him, but not his goods with him. All that he has remains behind him, while he, naked as he entered into the world, passes out of it by the portal of death. Riches cannot satisfy the soul; they cannot buy off death, nor can their owner insure their retention for the morrow. So Solomon admonishes his fellow creatures, "What profit hath he that hath labored for the wind?"

Again the Preacher speaks and discourses about wisdom. He acknowledged its value, for none were more competent than he was to speak of it. It strengthens the wise men more than ten mighty men which are in the city. It is better than strength, he could say, and better than weapons of war. (Chap. 7:11-19; 9:16, 18.) But here also the vanity of all things done under the sun made itself felt; for when he applied his heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on the earth, as he turned to behold the works of God, he found a limit to the prosecution of his researches; and as he surveyed the works of men, he was only made more painfully conscious of

the wretchedness and ruin brought in by sin.

Of the works of creation he had learned a great deal, as if elsewhere recorded; but man is but a finite being, unable to fathom the infinite. This Solomon discovered. "I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labor to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it." Chap. 8:17. There are fields of knowledge beyond man's capacity to explore or even reach. He may, like Solomon, arrive at this point, to learn from all he knows, how little he knows; how knowledge acquired is the mother of many a question which the student is unable to answer; and how incompetent he is to understand even all that he sees around him. Such must ever be his condition here. By the light of revelation we can look onward to a day when we shall, but not down here, know as we are known (1 Cor. 13:12).

Turning to investigate the actions of men, he may learn the evils that are done under the sun - the crying injustice, the lawlessness, the frauds, and many acts of oppression that are constantly practiced among men - to find, while he sees them, his powerlessness to hinder them (chap. 3:16; 8:14). Another arm is alone able to restrain the lawless; another mind than any of Adam's fallen descendants can alone devise the remedy. The day of the Son of man must dawn ere One will be found on earth competent to put things straight. How often is justice now perverted! The righteous suffer, and the guilty go free. Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in a low place. Servants ride on horses, and princes walk as servants on earth. (Chap. 10:6, 7.) And the wise man, courted for his help in time of pressing need, is forgotten when the hour of distress has passed away (chap. 9:1,5). Thus wisdom may disclose to its possessor what is wrong, and make him feel the bitterness of it, sensible all the time of his powerlessness to correct it. To know good and evil was the bait held out by the serpent - to be just like God. The wise man sees clearly the evil, knows what ought to be, but learns he cannot do it. And woman, originally God's provision for man, his suited help, is found to become, when a tool of the enemy, an instrument for his everlasting ruin (chap. 7:26-29).

After this we may be prepared for the picture presented at the close of the book. Man, created originally in the image of God, not subject to death, is depicted as traveling onward to the tomb, learning as he goes along, as we have seen, that all around of things done under the sun are vanity; and at the close of his life, giving in his own death a most convincing proof of the accuracy of the Preacher's statement, "All is vanity." Beautiful is the poetry of the description, but sad are the features of it.

While others may love to describe what man might have been, Solomon tells us what he is; but he speaks not of his greatness, his powers of mind or body; he writes of decay. Created to be the lord of God's creation on earth, manifesting the power of mind over matter, a pigmy by the side of the everlasting hills, yet able to accomplish gigantic works which seem almost to defy the ravages of time; far inferior to many of the animals in brute strength, yet able to subdue them, and to make the forces of nature subservient to his will; what might he not have been had sin not entered into the world? A worn out vessel, his strength decayed, his knees tottering, his hands trembling, his sight failing, his ears dull of hearing; all that once charmed him, able to charm him no longer, a mere wreck of what he was, awaiting the hour of his departure to his long home; such is he as described by Solomon. Who will wonder that the burden with which he began is the burden with

which he ends. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity." Chap. 1:2; 12:8.

But amid all that spoke of vanity there was another subject he touched on; for, being wise, he taught the people. He had spoken at length about man and his works; he speaks briefly about God and what He does. And what he says about God (for the name Jehovah does not occur in the book) only brings out in higher relief the ruined condition of man. Man abides not, his thoughts perish, his works crumble to dust, and his name is forgotten. Created originally not for death, he is now born to die, but God abides. "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him." Chap. 3:14. Here in the midst of what is transient is something permanent. This he had found and desired to impress on others (chap. 5:1-7; 11:9; 12:1). He would tell the creature of the Creator. It is not grace that he is charged to proclaim; it is not salvation he is empowered here to offer; but to God's creatures, responsible as such to Him that made them, he would speak. The Creator will take cognizance of, and make judiciary inquiry into, the actions of His creatures. This none can escape, and of this all need to be reminded. And now that he has exposed the vanity of all things that are done under the sun, he opens out the only word for man to follow: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Chap. 12:13. The fuller light that we possess confirms all that Solomon said of man, and tells us likewise more about God; but the principle here enunciated is true for all time - the creature should own the authority of God, and yield implicit obedience to all He is pleased to enjoin. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Chap. 12:14.

And just where Ecclesiastes ends, Proverbs begins. Ecclesiastes exposes the vanity of all things here; Proverbs tells us of true wisdom. Ecclesiastes lands man as man in decay and death; Proverbs holds out life, and tells us how to walk wisely on earth. In perfect keeping with this are the subjects of their closing chapters. What Ecclesiastes describes has been briefly referred to. What Proverbs speaks of is man and woman in their respective spheres; the man, King Lemuel, ruling; the woman, the virtuous wife, guiding the house wisely and well. We see them in their work, but we read of no end to it. Death is not introduced as cutting short their career of usefulness, or carrying them away, when helpless, by old age. They exemplify what Solomon had taught his son would flow from the possession of that wisdom which is to be desired - life. And we close the book, feeling that we leave them, as it were, the one on the throne and the other in the house. We come to the end of the book of Proverbs, but we leave them still in life and activity.

An Exhortation to Young Believers

The earnestness of young believers for the Lord's things has always been an encouragement. Can you not recall how you desired to live for Christ when you were first saved? In the freshness of first love there was that holy consecration to separate from that which was inconsistent with the new life in Christ. It wasn't long before the Holy Spirit was controlling many areas of your life; but then temptation came.

Every believer is tempted, and always will be - some in one way and some in another. Tragedy may mark the end of any temptation, but it need not be so, for the Scripture reads, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. 10:13.

This is written to be of help to any who have failed to gain the victory over a particular temptation, and are now bound by a pet sin or habit. You may have sincerely wanted to surrender this area to Christ. You have tried to fight that besetting sin; you seemingly surrendered it, and trusted God for it, but you continue grieving the Lord.

The first step to victory is to understand that our battle as a Christian is in the spiritual realm. We must realize that the primary place of attack by Satan is in the mind. There is the battlefield; there he gains entrance. It is Satan's strategy to gain strongholds, and those temptations that we just cannot resist are his strongholds in our lives. We have trained our minds to respond in a certain way - the wrong way - and it needs to be removed.

"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Eph. 4:23. "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2).

It is most important in renewing the mind to identify the problem of sin with the cross of Christ. Call it sin; confess it to God as sin. Understand that we do not sin because we cannot help it, but because we want to. We have not yet let Christ have His way. Look at your sin from God's perspective; see it as horrid, abominable, wretched, and as the sin for which Christ died.

God uses His Word. Memorize scriptures that deal with your need, and appropriate them. Use them as the mighty weapons of God to destroy the devil's hold upon you. Take that temptation to the cross. Let the cross remind you of what Christ has done for you, and of the fact that now you belong to Him. He is able to make that very temptation a means of growth and strength as you gain victory over it.

God is waiting to prove Himself a God of deliverance, freedom and triumph. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [fleshly], but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." 2 Cor. 10:4.

Faith, Hope and Love

1 Thess. 1

It is very striking to find that in every epistle, with the exception of Galatians, the Apostle gives thanks unceasingly to God for the saints to whom he writes, remembering them in his prayers night and day. His heart being with God, praise to Him is the first thing that rises up, though afterward he may have to instruct or rebuke or correct them in his letters. Thus the heart, being with God, gets at that which God gives.

In the case of the Galatians, they had apparently gotten off the ground of justification by faith, so that he stands in doubt of them; and yet, after he has expressed his feelings of perplexity and sorrow at their state, we find his heart is still with God above the circumstances, enabling him to say, "I have confidence in you through the Lord."

Now this is just what we need in passing through the world. We must go through it, and God means that we should find it a place of trial and difficulty, that it may test our hearts and teach us what He is to us under all.

It is important, however, to remember that our exercises - I mean Christian exercises - follow complete and finished redemption. There are exercises in Egypt before redemption - making bricks with straw, and the taskmaster's lash. But the Red Sea delivered God's redeemed forever from Egypt, as we read in the song of Moses - "Thou... hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto thy holy habitation." Exod. 15:13. The wilderness journey is not contemplated in this song. It is deliverance from Egypt, and God setting the redeemed in His inheritance.

So with us, our redemption in Christ has delivered us from the world and sin and death, and has brought us in Christ into the heavenly places. But, as a matter of fact, there is a wilderness to go through. God might have brought the Israelites into the land by a short way, but He led them around by the longer, "lest," as He said, "peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt." Exod. 13:17. He counts the hairs of their heads. He thinks of what is best for them in every circumstance. After forty years they find their clothes have not waxed old, neither have their feet swelled. They had not thought of this till the journey was over, but their God had thought of their clothing every day. He had never omitted to rain manna upon them. True, He suffered them to hunger and thirst, to humble them and prove them, but only that He might supply their bread and their water for them. Through their unbelief they would not go into the land at the end of two years, and were turned back to wander thirty-eight years longer in the desert; but God turned back with them, and took not away from them His pillar of cloud by day, nor His pillar of fire by night.

It is true that God deals with us in all the trials and difficulties of life. He means us to have trouble, and to feel the opposition of everything around to the life He has given us. What we want then is to have the heart living with God, and then we shall have His mind about all our circumstances. Do

you suppose that if Israel had been thinking of God's interest and care for them, they would have murmured as they did? Surely not.

It does not matter what our troubles are. One may have the care of God's people pressing on him; another, the cares of the world; another, trouble in his family. There are countless varieties of exercises, no doubt appointed by Him for His people; but the answer to every trouble is having the heart living with God above the circumstances.

Now if we turn to the state of the Thessalonians, we shall see them bright and happy in the midst of most terrible persecutions. There is no epistle so happy as this. They are in what we call their first love. The springs of divine affections were bright in them. In the third verse we find faith and hope and love - that which constituted the full expression of grace working in the Christians - active in them. The Apostle remembers their work of faith, their labor of love, and their patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now how far is it thus with you, dear friends? It is a blessed thing to work for the Lord. It is a great privilege to be allowed to have any service for Christ; but how far is it with you a work of faith? I do not mean to question sincerity. You may work for the Lord, and earnestly desire His blessing; but is every word you say uttered in direct faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus the expression of what your faith in Him is enjoying? or do you say what you know to be blessed truth, and what you desire God to bless, while the secret spring that should link the work with your communion to Christ is gone? It is not that you may not have faith in the work. That may be all sure, and yet, in those inner springs of your spirit, your work may not be a work of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, you may labor abundantly, and you may love the labor, and do it willingly and honestly, but is the labor so completely the result of your own personal love to Christ, that it is really what these Thessalonians' labor was, a "labor of love"? But there was more than work and labor; there was also the condition of their hearts. They looked for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, not as a doctrine, but as the Object of their affections. A mother looks for a son who is to return from sea, not as a mere truth, but his return is in her heart. If it be delayed, can she settle down and say, I have made a mistake, and think no more of him? Oh, no; she must exercise patience, but hers is the patience of hope." She may attend to her household duties as before - that is quite right - but where will her thoughts be? why, wondering when her son will be home. All truths in Scripture are persons or facts. People may say, Why, you have talked of the Lord's coming now for forty years, and He has not come yet. But that alters nothing. We look for Him because we love Him, and wait to see Him, and so we exercise the "patience of hope." He is Himself waiting, and we wait with Him. We are companions in the patience of Jesus Christ. We know the reason of His delay. It is God's long-suffering in saving sinners; therefore we are not left in ignorance. But we cannot give up His return; to do so would make us the most miserable of all men. We find the "patience of hope" in our blessed Lord when in this world. He served and labored in faith and love to His Father, but He also waited for the coming glory; His life was the patience of hope.

But if we had not more than the work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope, the character of Christian walk would be very imperfect. In Christ there was perfect obedience. All His work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope, was in obedience to God His Father. As He says to John, "But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do." These Thessalonians did all "in the sight of God and our Father." This obedience is most

blessed, and yet it is a check upon us which we need, carrying about with us the evil we do. Their faith, hope, and love, sweet as they were in themselves, needed to be in the sight of God their Father, under His eye, and done in obedience to Him.

Now of such the Apostle can speak as "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." He knew it, not by God's secret counsels, for none but God Himself thus knows it, but by the exhibition of His grace in them. He could see, indeed, that they were God's elect. Of the Galatians he had to say, "I stand in doubt of you." He can rejoice in these Thessalonians, as evidently chosen of God. When we see such blessed fruits of grace in any, how sweet it is to rejoice over them, and to know they are indeed God's elect; while of others we can say nothing, but must stand in doubt of them, as Paul did of the Galatians. And this testimony not only rejoices the Apostle, but in every place their faith to God is spread abroad, so that he needs to say nothing about them. People exclaimed, What a wonderful thing has happened in Thessalonica! A man came down there and preached to them, and a number of the people have turned to God and broken all their idols, and whatever you do to them, you cannot overcome them. They are so happy in what they believe, that even if you kill them, they do not mind, for they are waiting for the Son of God from heaven. No doubt their lips testified too, but their lives spoke so that Paul had no need of saying what they were.

Is it so with you, beloved? Are you thus waiting for God's Son from heaven, having turned to God from idols? and, whatever be your circumstances and trials, are you living above them in communion with God? or are you happy in the world, whether Christ comes or not?

Faith's Ground of Confidence

When the soul apprehends the Lord Jesus as the one offering for sin, it has confidence in God, and that on the very ground of His knowing thoroughly our sinfulness. It is impossible that God should pass over the blood of the Lord Jesus, and impute to sinners those sins which He has washed away.

God cannot impute sin to a believer without condemning the value of Christ's blood-shedding and virtually denying the efficacy of it. Faith knows that death is God's own sentence against sin, and that it has been executed on Christ in the sinner's stead. Faith sets its seal that God is true, and receives His thoughts who has said about the blood-shedding of Jesus, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Family Living

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 be like the 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.

Father Knows

"Johnnie, don't you think you have as much as you can carry?" said Frank to his brother who was standing with open arms receiving the bundles his father placed upon them. "You've more than you can carry now."

"Never mind," said Johnnie in a sweet, happy voice; "my father knows how much I can carry."

How long it takes many of us to learn the lesson little Johnnie had by heart, "Father knows how much I can carry." No grumbling, no discontentment, but a sweet trust in our heavenly Father's love and care that we shall not be overburdened.

Galatians 2:20

What life are you living? You say you are not living a disgraceful life of sin and shame, but are you living to please yourself, to surround yourself with the comforts of this life, or is it Christ that lives in you? Then there is pleasure and fruit for God; there is devotedness to do the will of God, dependence and obedience (Psalm 16). If you have passed from death unto life (John 5:24), what do you know of that life? Can you say, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"? Gal. 2:20.

Garment of Praise for Spirit of Heaviness

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:6, 7.

The peace of God instead of earthly care! What a blessed substitute! How infinite God's peace! How innumerable our cares! And yet the heart and mind that is burdened by care may find perfect relief in the enjoyment of the peace of God.

Now what is the secret? How can this relief - and far more than relief - be found? To inure oneself to pain, as the Stoics of old, is far short of the peace of God. Anyone can understand the effort of the philosopher who sets his teeth and bravely determines to master the ills of life; but to become possessed, to be kept, or guarded, or garrisoned as a fortress held by power unconquerable, of the peace of God amid sorrows and tears and difficulties, is altogether beyond comprehension. It is nonetheless true.

Let us examine our passage:

"Be careful for nothing."

The word "nothing" covers the whole range of wilderness anxieties without omitting one. It does not include sin, far from it, for the simple reason that sin is in no wise contemplated in this epistle. It is not proper to the experience of the Christian, though, alas! every true believer realizes its presence, and needs to be on constant guard against its subtle workings. Sin is abnormal to Christian experience - not impossible, but not normal. It is confessed and judged just on that very account.

The child of God should be most careful about sin, but apart from that he should be careful about nothing - no thing!

"But in everything," here is the blessed remedy: by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

This is exercise, deep, earnest and precious. It is not carelessness or indifference. There is prayer; there is supplication; there is making requests known to God; and there is the blending of thanksgiving with every prayer. This signifies close personal dealing with God.

"In everything," no matter how small, or how great or complex, let each request of the burdened heart be laid before Him.

The Bible teems with instances of prayerful men who spread all kinds of requests before God, from kings on their thrones to prisoners in chains; and never was a deaf ear turned to the lowly and believing suppliant.

Supplication is prayer intensified; it is importunity; its root idea is the sense of need; it is illustrated in the prodigal son. The word is oftentimes used by the Apostle Paul; but it must carry no legal or cringing or selfish element; it must be sustained by thanksgiving; for remember that the Christian has received infinitely more than he can ever request. His blessings far exceed his greatest needs. God loves a thankful suppliant, and in this happy spirit the requests are made known to One who assuredly knows all about them, but who waits for the cries of the wearied child so that He may pour in the flood of His own incomprehensible peace. As God's peace enters, care departs; the soul is tranquilized. No direct answer may have been gathered - the thorn may remain in the flesh - but the heart and mind are garrisoned by the deep, eternal calm that marks the throne on high. See the reflection of that calm as it shone in the face of Stephen; see it in the words of Paul: "I am ready to be offered"; recall it in the bold language of the three men who had to face the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, when they said: "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter.... We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden

image which thou hast set up.." And witness the Son of God as their companion in that fiery ordeal.

Yes, thousands of others of lesser fame rise to bear brilliant testimony in lives of labor for Christ or on beds of pain; in scenes of tumult or amid the bitter worries of daily desert life to the reality of that wonderful peace of God which, weak and failing as they have been, has garrisoned heart and mind for days and months and years of varied pilgrim experiences.

This is perhaps one of the very finest and most exquisite visible proofs of the genuineness of the faith of Christ. May reader and writer know the depths of God's peace better, and may that wonderful peace, as the result of prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, bring conscious relief to the heart, and brightness to the spirit, so that our step may be quickened and our very face made to reflect a little more of the glory of that place where alone the peace of God can be found.

God Is Better Than Our Faith

We once said to a dear woman in Jamaica, much tried in her circumstances, "God is better to us than our fears."

She answered with a quick smile, "Yes, God is better to us than our faith."

I confess that I stood rebuked, and felt I was in the presence of one taught in the school of God. I looked on that woman as a triumph of Christianity, as a complete answer to the first question raised in the Bible, a question doubting God's goodness and love, "Yea, hath God said?" The object of Satan was achieved when he instilled doubt into man's heart at the fall. God's triumph over Satan is proclaimed when a weak saint is found triumphing over afflictions, praising Him for trials, rejoicing in tribulation. "Perfect love casteth out fear." To trust Him in the dark and adore Him for His ways, is indeed a vindication of God over evil.

God Manifest in Flesh: Reverence and Adoration, Not Reason

Christ came to do God's will; in Him was no sin. It was humanity in Christ where God was, and not humanity separate from God in itself.... It was not man where no evil was, like Adam innocent, but man in the midst of evil; it was not man bad in the midst of evil, like Adam fallen, but man perfect - perfect according to God - in the midst of evil, God manifest in flesh; real, proper humanity, but His soul always having the thoughts that God produces in man, and in absolute communion with God, save when He suffered on the cross where He must, as to the suffering of His soul, be forsaken of God; more perfect then, as to the extent of the perfection and the degree of obedience, than anywhere else, because He accomplished the will of God in the face of His wrath, instead of doing it in the joy of His communion; and therefore He asked that this cup should pass, which He never did elsewhere. He could not find His meat in the wrath of God....

I recommend to avoid discussing and defining the Person of our blessed Savior. You will lose the savor of Christ in your thoughts, and you will find in their room the barrenness of man's spirit in the things of God and in the affections which pertain to them. It is a labyrinth for man, because he labors there at his own charge. It is as if one dissected the body of his friend instead of nourishing himself with his affections and character.

God's Good Pleasure

It is very striking - and the more striking as we study it - how the thoughts of God's heart, which were before the foundation of the world, come out in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ as a man. He who shared His Father's heart and the secrets of His bosom, came down to earth in the power of divine love, to accomplish all His thoughts and purposes. Not merely had God these thoughts, nor was it enough to reveal them, but Jesus has accomplished them in the midst of sin and ruin, and God has set us in all the delights of His purposes which were before the world was.

It is striking too that in the New Testament we find the history of the first Adam is completely dropped out. He has had his day, and his day is past. And while the New Testament notices this fact, it connects what God is, and His eternal thoughts and purposes, with Christ, and passes over the history of the first Adam with a brief notice of what it has been and what God has done with him. Tried in innocence, he fails; sins without the law; transgresses the law when given; the revelation of judgment by John the Baptist affects him not; the piping strains of grace in Jesus are unnoticed and his heart unmoved; the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven with the message of pardon, is resisted; the saints are slain in proclaiming the love which rose above all man's sin; and the Church of God is wasted and persecuted. Such is man! No reciprocity in his heart to the pleading of divine affection; no receptivity of the truth which proves its power by reaching his conscience, and its fitness for his state by touching his heart. He must be born again!

Now in Pro. 8:22-31 we find a passage of exceeding beauty which tells us of the thoughts which were in God's heart, and His purposes in connection with His Son, before the world was. Before the foundations of the mountains and hills - before all things which had a beginning, even "from everlasting" - the Son was there. He is presented here as "wisdom," and Christ is the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). He was rejoicing always before Him - rejoicing in the habitable parts of His earth before it came into being by the fiat of the Son - and His good pleasure (or delight) was in the sons of men.

I will now trace how this wondrous seeking heart of God has had, and has, its eternal satisfaction conceived, made good, revealed, and accomplished in Jesus and, more wondrous still, to God's glory by us, for all things are for our sakes, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

In Bethlehem of Judea, one night nearly two thousand years ago, the glory of Jehovah shone out from heaven on the darkness which really and morally enveloped the earth, and night was turned into day. The angel of Jehovah appeared to some poor shepherds in the fields, to tell them of the birth of a Savior, Christ the Lord. And suddenly the hosts of heaven joined the angel of the Lord, and proclaimed with bursts of praise, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men." Luke 2:14; J.N.D. Trans.

"How rightly rose the praises

Of heaven that wondrous night

When shepherds hid their faces
In brightest angel light!
"More than just those acclamations
Than when the glorious band
Chanted earth's deep foundations,
Just laid by God's right hand!"

The world had come forth from God in all the harmony and beauty of creation, and "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God [angels] shouted for joy" (Job 38:7), and now its Creator had become a man. Adam had been set at the head of creation and had fallen, and his history was past. Another Adam appeared - the "last" - and the "day-spring" dawned upon the darkened, ruined earth. God's glory now has its highest expression, for His Son has become a babe. Peace was proposed to the ruined earth, and it was refused. Still God has His "glory" in the highest, and His "good pleasure" is now to have its fruition; and the angels praise with unselfish hearts, happy that God is about to have His way. Then they go back to heaven to ascend and descend upon this Son of man.

Thirty years pass on and a lonely Man in whom all the fullness of the Godhead bodily was pleased to dwell, passed along His lowly path of obedience. A sinless Man was before God's eye on earth, and the sweet savor of Jesus refreshed His heart. Thirty years were over, and John the Baptist had thundered out his declamations against ungodly sinners, declaring that God now had the ax in His hand, that He would clear the field of unfruitful trees, no matter what were their pretensions. Some hearts are touched and consciences convicted, and they pass down to the waters of Jordan with the only fruit in their hand which God ever did or ever will accept from the hands of a sinner; that is, the confession of their sins.

Among the crowd appears Jesus. He had patiently waited God's time, and He recognizes that God is now at work in men; and He who knew the secrets of His Father's heart above, and the secrets of men's hearts below, at once identifies Himself with this movement of grace in the hearts of repentant sinners, and passes down in tenderest love and lowliness into the waters of the Jordan. But His delight (or "good pleasure") was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work; and so He says, "My goodness extendeth not to Thee; to the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent [Thou hast said], In them is all My delight." Psalm 16:2, 3; J.N.D. Trans. The lines had fallen to Him in pleasant places indeed; His goodly heritage was filling His heart in the foretaste of God's good pleasure or delight being fulfilled.

The instant He is there according to God's thought, the heaven is opened on Him - fit object of heaven, as of God. The Holy Ghost descends and seals Him for His service here. And now the Father must have His word; He cannot (so to speak) withhold His satisfaction, and His voice is heard proclaiming, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I have good pleasure." (I may remark that the word is really or substantially the same all the way through in the passages I quote in this paper from the New Testament. The verbal or the noun form of the same word is used in them all, and the literal translation is given.) And here, as has been remarked, we find the first revelation of the Trinity; the Son is there, the Holy Ghost seals Him as Man, and the Father's voice proclaims

His good pleasure in Him.

Time passes on, and after confronting the devil, and binding the strong man in obedience, He comes forth to serve in obedience still, but with a power that could remove every ill that had entered the world and brought men into misery. If they are sick, He heals; if dead, He raises them; if afflicted, He comforts; if hungry, He feeds; if possessed, He breaks the chains in which the strong man bound his victims, and sets them free. He reveals the Father's heart on earth in grace - brings the light of God to detect the conscience of sinners, and yet with a love which attracts their heart. But man would not have Him. He might feed the hungry, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, drive out Satan from man; but it brought God too near to men for them to enjoy their own wills and their own ways; they will not have God on any terms, but beseech Him to depart from their midst.

At last comes the inquiry, "Whom say the people that I am?" The answer discloses that, as said the poet, "None cared His name to know." Men speculated; some said one thing and some another, but a few hearts confessed Him as "the Christ of God." (See Matt. 16:13-16; Mark 8:27-29; Luke 9:18-20.) But this was no more to be preached, for the "Son of man" was now about to suffer, and here He first speaks definitely of His death. Then in each gospel which gives the scene, He goes to the mount of transfiguration and, while transfigured before His wondering disciples, the Father's voice is again heard through the stillness of the night, which is again, as at the incarnation, turned into day. (Compare Luke 9:37.) "This is My beloved Son, in whom I have good pleasure." This is as if to say, Men have refused My heart and My Son when I have spent it and given Him in seeking theirs; but My heart has not changed in Him. Thus a rejected Christ receives His Father's heart's expression, In Thee "I have good pleasure."

He leaves the mountain and turns to meet the cross and shame which awaited Him at the end of His pathway, with "not where to lay His head" (Luke 9:58). His heart thinks afresh of the deeper need of man, and He sends out the seventy on this last journey. When they return (chap. 10:17, etc.) with the news that to their faith even the power of casting out devils through His name was given, He bids them "rejoice not," for another thought presses itself from His heart - their "names are written in heaven." God was writing down in heaven the names of those who followed Him in whom was all His "good pleasure," and Jesus was revealing to them the Father. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for thus was the good pleasure before Thee." No purpose of His heart would be frustrated or turned aside, and while blindness and darkness was coming on earth and man, the light of these eternal counsels was falling on the hearts of the babes by the Father's "good pleasure" to reveal them.

We still follow this unfrustrated purpose of His heart, and in the midst of Luke 12 we find these "babes" instructed for their pathway while passing through an adverse world with girded loins like men that wait for their Lord. To them He says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." There is no change in His love, and He will act as a father. He will not merely put you into it, but He will give it to you.

But in all this pathway He was alone. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, or He would abide alone; and so He passes down to the cross, meets His people's need as to their sins,

Satan's power of death, and the judgment of God. He takes up our sins and bears them as His own, and blots them out forever. He meets and destroys Satan's power of death by death, and bears the judgment and all the demands of God's righteousness as to sin. Sin, death, and judgment, are passed for Him who believes His testimony, and sets to his seal that God is true. And God seals with His Spirit him who does so.

Then He bows the head for which He had no place here below, and gives up the ghost. He dies and rises again - tells His disciples that His Father is now their Father, and His God their God, and ascends as man to glory. Then come out all those wonderful counsels and purposes of God's heart. The orbit of the "good pleasure" of God is described, and His people are blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Pro. 8), "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved." Eph. 1:3-6. The circle is complete, and we are brought into all these delights of God's eternal purposes, and the thoughts of His heart which were before the foundation of the world!

Thus we have the eternal bosom revealing this "good pleasure" which was there before the world was made (Pro. 8). The angels praised as the infant Jesus was laid in the manger at Bethlehem - the first expression of this wondrous "good pleasure" in the sons of men (Luke 2).

The Father's voice expressed His "good pleasure" as Jesus entered His path of service, at the Jordan, at the moment when He was working in the hearts of men (Luke 3).

On the mountain of transfiguration this "good pleasure" is again expressed as Jesus, rejected by men, unveils His glory before the eyes of Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17; Luke 9).

His own voice tells us, raised in thanksgiving, of the Father's purposes in revealing Him to the babes according to the "good pleasure" which was ever before Him (Luke 10).

And again, He teaches to this "little flock" the purposes of the Father's heart concerning them, in giving them the kingdom; but a work was yet to be accomplished before all could be made known, and the saints set in all these delights of God; and His heart was straitened until it was accomplished (Luke 12:50).

But this work is over, and the "good pleasure of His will" is brought to fruition, and we are set in its fullest expression in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1).

But there is an age to come in which the preface of this eternal purpose is seen - the millennial glory. And still the "good pleasure" is expressed. He unfolds to us "the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself" to gather all things in heaven and earth in one in Christ; and in Him we also have obtained this inheritance in the age to come, where we shall reign with Him until He puts down all authority and power. Then He gives up the kingdom after the perfection of His administration, and becomes, in the eternal age, in the new heavens and the new earth, the Son, subject as man again to His Father, and we with Him in that scene where God's delights are fully expressed and fulfilled according to His "good pleasure" in the sons of men forever.

But between this calling into the orbit of the "good pleasure" of God and its fruition in the ages to come, is God to have no "good pleasure"? We turn to Phil. 2:12 and we find a feeble people always obedient when the Church had apostolic care, but now when it is gone, much more in its absence; and God was working in them "to will and to do of His good pleasure" still.

If the broad line of unsullied light tracked itself before God's eye in Jesus' path on earth, a tiny streak of light is found in the path of those who have, with broken wills and hearts subject to Him, sought and found in the obedient, will-less footprints of Jesus the "good pleasure" expressed in doing the will of His Father, in those who seek to yield themselves to Him who works in their weakness to will and to do of that good pleasure.

What can we say then, beloved, to these things? Shall we not say, "Amen" to the Apostle's prayer in 2 Thess. 1:11, 12? "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

God's Object in Our Trials

Ah! has Christ ever touched the quick of your soul in solitude? Do you know the exquisite tenderness of His touch? He does not tear and lacerate. The necessities and trials of saints down here are allowed by God in order to show them what Christ is for them. If I have taken Him as Lord, I do not expect an easy way. God never meant us to have it as disciples. He takes us into a rough path to show what Christ is, and that in it His grace may be able to vent itself. There is a yearning in His heart up there to let this grace be displayed in a poor needy people down here - a longing that His strength should be made perfect in their weakness. Do you know for yourself the grace of that living Christ? Do you know what Christ has to do with you, and you with Him? Do you know yourself as one of a flock that belongs to Him, that He is tending and guarding through the wilderness, and carrying on to glory to be forever with Himself?

God's Stars

Have you ever heard of John Livingstone? He was the brother of David Livingstone, the pioneer missionary to Africa. John died one of the richest men in Ontario.

The brothers grew up together in a simple Scottish home. Both received the same parental instruction.

In time, the brothers made decisions which affected their subsequent years. David decided to forsake all and follow Christ. John decided to amass a fortune instead. David died in a hut in Africa. John lived in affluence and died a wealthy man.

When John died, a notice in the obituary column of a newspaper said, among other things, that he was the brother of David Livingstone, the famed missionary in Africa.

In evaluating the lives of the Livingstone brothers, let us remember this Bible verse: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever." Dan. 12:3.

God's Ways of Grace

For a moment look back on all your ways from your youth upward (but you cannot bear to do this if you have not settled peace); look at them all, and look at them all in the light of God's Word and Spirit. I retrace the foolishness and sinfulness of my doings, and the patience and long-suffering of my God. I see Him guarding me here, teaching me there, lifting me up when I was ready to fall, and comforting me when I only expected punishment; and hence I adore and praise Him the more. But if it be thus in looking back now, how much more it will be in the moment when set in the glory! I shall know Him and see Him, and trace all His ways in the fullness of that light which now, in the measure of it I possess, manifests Him and myself in contrast. For surely it is just in the measure in which I can judge my ways in His presence, that the effect is adoration and praise.

Going on to Perfection

Heb. 6:1

It is clear that we are enjoined to "go on unto perfection," but it certainly is not to perfection in the flesh. This was the error of the Galatian believers, and brought upon them apostolic censure. They were remonstrated with by the Spirit of God as "foolish," "bewitched," and as those who did "not obey the truth," in that, having "begun in the Spirit," they afterward sought to be made perfect in the flesh (Gal. 3:3). They "did run well," but they seemed to have lost sight of what Christ crucified had done for them, and to have forgotten that they had two natures - that which is born "after the flesh," and that which is "born after the Spirit" - and let slip the blessed fact that they were not now in the flesh (though the flesh was in them), but in the Spirit, a new creation in Christ Jesus, which neither circumcision, law, nor any ordinances of any kind could bring about or alter. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Gal. 6:15.

It is certain then that the going on to perfection, here set forth, in no wise favors the false notion, so subversive of Christianity and so severely censured in the Scriptures, of seeking to be made perfect in the flesh. As to moral principle, we should as God's children seek to imitate our Father; therefore our Lord said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." But this is a widely different thought from being made perfect in the flesh. The truth is that the believer will not lose this evil principle in him which is born after the flesh, in which dwells nothing good, until the Lord comes, or he falls asleep through Jesus, and is forever with the Lord.

In order to understand what is here meant by "let us go on unto perfection," we need to remember that the epistle is written to the Hebrews, and that the expression occurs nowhere else in Scripture. Those addressed had been born and educated in a religious order of things which, though it recognized man in the flesh, under law, and of the world, was divinely instituted before Christianity was brought in, though these Jewish things abounded with types and shadows of realities now made known. They had been accustomed to think of the elementary truths of "repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God"; they were familiar with divers washings or "baptisms," "laying on of hands" on the sacrifices, and believed in "resurrection of the dead" and "eternal judgment." But these things were the beginning of the doctrine of Christ, infantile truth, the "milk" of divine revelation compared with "strong meat" which God has given us since the accomplished work of His beloved Son, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Many of these Hebrews were still looking at Christianity as connected with a system on earth, and were taken up with the first buddings of divine revelation, with which Jews were familiar, instead of knowing God's Son now glorified as the central object of God's present ways. The consequence was, there was no spiritual progress. Instead of being teachers, as they ought to have been, they needed to be taught again "the first principles of the oracles of God"; so there was no hope of their getting on a truly Christian footing and progressing in the truth until they received in faith the "strong meat" which communicated to souls the perfections of the Person, work, and offices of a Messiah not now on earth, though He will be, but glorified in heaven (chap. 5:11-14).

"Therefore," said the writer to these Hebrews (observe this word therefore as connecting it with what had gone before), "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ," or the word of the beginning of Christ, or first principles, "let us go on unto perfection." What seems to have brought the writer to this point in the epistle was, he desired to say "many things" to them about the "high priest after the order of Melchisedec," the Son in heaven; but they were "dull of hearing"; they had not the sense of the contrast between Judaism and Christianity, but were so taken up with Jewish things which dimly pointed to Christ, instead of with Christ Himself where He is, that their state of soul was low indeed. The inspired writer knew they would not advance until they had to do with Messiah now in heaven as a totally distinct thing, and in contrast with the Jewish system which still surrounded them; for the temple was then standing, and shadowy things in measure still going on. For such there was no deliverance but being taken up with the personal glory of the Son, the eternal efficacy of His one offering, His all-prevailing and unchangeable priesthood, and His present intercession for us in the sanctuary above. Here we have perfection, a perfection which not only had its source in divinely "perfect love," but gives "perfect peace" to the believer, because he has a perfect conscience and a perfect way of approach to God.

It was then to Christ in heaven the writer of the epistle directed the hearts of these Hebrews; and, when we are under the Spirit's guidance, we pass through the various chapters with our feet consciously on earth, but our eyes every now and then specially directed to the glorified Son of man in the heavens. Let us observe some of the instances of this.

In chapter 1 we are invited to look at the Son, by whom the worlds were made, who after He had died for our sins, sat down on the throne of glory. "When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." v. 3.

In chapter 2 the proper attitude of a believer on earth is described as gazing on the Lord in glory. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." v. 9.

In chapter 3 we are enjoined to consider Him, not only as the One who came down from heaven, but who is also gone up there and entered upon His priestly office for us. "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." v. 1.

In chapter 4 we are bidden to behold Him as man passed through the heavens, yet Son of God, and there our sympathizing High Priest, so that we hold fast our confession, and approach God's throne with boldness as a throne of grace to find grace for seasonable help. What unutterable blessedness we know in present intercourse with the Son of God where He is now! "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (confession). "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." vv. 14-16.

In chapter 5 we behold Him as the Man, yet God's Son, who was on earth offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him out of death, but now Priest by divine appointment after the order of Melchisedec. "So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, today have I

begotten Thee.... Called of God a high priest after the order of Melchisedec." vv. 5-10.

In chapter 6 we see Him as the forerunner who is gone inside the veil for us who are still running the race here. Blessed object for the contemplation of our hearts! "Within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." vv. 19, 20.

In chapter 7 we are still gazing on the Son in heaven in His eternal and unchangeable character, as able to save us right on to the end, and ever living to make intercession for us (vv. 24-28).

In chapter 8 He is presented to us a sitting Priest, and active in the sanctuary in heaven. These were entirely new ideas to a Jew. Their priest, from Aaron downward, could never sit down, but was always standing because of having to offer many sacrifices which could never take away sins. But "We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." vv. 1, 2.

In chapter 9 we learn that He went into heaven itself by His own blood, and now appears before the face of God for us, having obtained eternal redemption, and has made the power of it known to us by the eternal Spirit while going on to our eternal inheritance (vv. 12-24).

In chapter 10 we are instructed that we have liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus where He is, and are assured by the witness of the Holy Spirit that our sins and iniquities will be remembered no more, and that the coming of the Lord is nigh. "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (vv. 14, 19, 37.)

In chapter 12 we are enjoined to look away from every other object to Him who ran the race of faith perfectly, who endured the cross and despised the shame, and is now as man, who resisted sin unto blood, sitting at the right hand of the throne of God. While running on to meet Him at His coming, we are sustained and cheered by thus being occupied with Him where He is. (vv. 1, 2.)

In chapter 13 we are supposed to be so occupied with Him, and all the goodness and mercy of God to us in and through Him, as to be offering "by Him" the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks "to His name," and like Him, not forgetting to minister to those around us.

Nothing more need be quoted to show how clearly it is the mind of God that we should now while on earth know the heaven opened over us to faith by the rent veil, and have personal occupation with our Lord Jesus Christ there as truth which delivers from a weak and infantile state of soul, and is not "milk," but "strong meat," because it ministers to us the perfections of Christ in heaven, the eternal efficacy of His one offering and of His divinely appointed and unchangeable priesthood as sitting on the throne of God.

It is well to lay this to heart, and to often ask ourselves, Am I taken up with the Son of God in glory on account of what He is in Himself, what He is to God, and as the One in whom are all my resources, blessings, joy, strength, and inheritance? The more we ponder this epistle, the more we shall be convinced that our souls have not accepted the blessings which the accomplished work of the Son entitle us to enjoy, unless we are consciously inside the veil where He now is, and offering to God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving as purged worshippers.

Grace

Job had the blessing, but was working to keep it, as verse 5 of the first chapter shows us. He did not fully know grace, and was miserable, as he himself says in chapter 3:25, 26.

God sent all the trial to teach him grace so that he might know that he neither deserved the blessing, nor could he keep it.

This lesson, when learned, made Job a happy man. How many there are like Job! If I get the blessing without deserving it, it is clear I can never lose it for want of merit. We stand in grace (Rom. 5:2). Working to keep the blessing - with that object - is to have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4).

Graduation

This month we wish to address some remarks to you, our young Christian readers, for June often brings important changes into your lives.

Some of you will complete your formal education and receive diplomas. This is a great event for you. At such a time it is well to remember that in our spiritual lives this never occurs, for we never graduate from God's school while we are in the world. The youngest and oldest saints are in that school. Here we are learning God and His grace on the one hand, and what poor things we are on the other. Here our capacities for the knowledge and enjoyment of Him in that scene of bliss are being formed.

You will find that in God's school it is often the same in one respect as in the school you have just left, in that as we go on, the lessons become more advanced. How else would our experience grow? But we have a faithful, wise, and loving Teacher. He leads us on from lesson to lesson with the perfect skill of one who knows the end from the beginning, and He knows just exactly how to bring us into more conformity to Himself; yet withal He does it in that perfect divine love to us as His children. And He is too faithful to us to allow us to pass on without learning our lessons. Students in the world's schools are sometimes passed along without having mastered their lessons, but our Father will take us back time and again over the same lesson if needful.

As you now stand with diploma in hand and look at the distant horizon, what are your thoughts? What is the main object before you? In all probability you will have to have some way of earning a living, and it is well that it is so. Work has been a wonderful blessing to fallen men; without it, he is just the more the plaything of the devil. When man fell, God's sentence was, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Gen. 3:19. But men have been seeking to circumvent this divine decree; they seek to eliminate toil and labor, and to live by wit and scheme. Idleness, however, is not good; it has led to many falls. Many scriptures teach us the importance of honest labor. Just a few of the many are: "If any would not work, neither should he eat"; "Let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth"; "We... exhort... that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."

If you face the problem of choosing an occupation, or perhaps training for some profession, do seek guidance and wisdom from above. The choice you make probably determines much of the character of your future life. May your one desire be to be found in the path of the Lord's will for you, and then to seek His help and grace to glorify Him in it. Do not set your heart on being great in this world, for this is indeed a snare to the children of God. The One whom we follow was not great here - He was rejected. Pride is in all hearts, and it easily leads us to aspire for prominence here. Remember that Satan is the god and prince of this world, and the higher we get in it, the closer we are to him who is its ruler. If you should be thrust into an important position, you will need more grace to walk with God in it.

Beware too of the snare of seeking to be rich. It is the love of money that lies at the root of every evil. People who love money will do many things that their own consciences condemn. We do not say that God may not give an increase of material goods to some, but "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." Those who are rich are warned not to trust in the uncertainty of riches (and how uncertain they are!) but in the living God, and are exhorted to be rich in good works, and ready to distribute to those who have need.

Some of you will marry at this time. We trust that it will be "only in the Lord." To you who do, we wish the Lord's richest blessings. May He grant you grace and wisdom to go on together for His glory - each for the other, and both for the Lord. May we be permitted to urge on you the necessity of family reading of the Word and prayer. Begin it the very first day of your married life, and do not neglect it at any time, nor relegate it to a mere routine matter that has little bearing on your lives. If you do, your spiritual life will suffer as though a worm were eating away the root of a beautiful plant. Also remember the exhortation, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." Heb. 10:25.

We earnestly urge you to ponder the scriptures that teach the husband and the wife their respective places and responsibilities. We pass on to you a remark we recently heard from a beloved servant of the Lord: "If you want to be unhappy, just be a rebel against God's word to husbands, wives, fathers, children, servants, etc. We are not wiser than God." He has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness, and His blessing is upon those who walk in that path which He has carefully marked for us. (If you have not read the book, "The Institution of Marriage, and Related Subjects," we commend it to you for what we believe is helpful counsel.)

Others of you will be making trips to distant places to see new landscapes and unfamiliar faces. You will have fresh opportunities to see some of the beauties and wonders of God's creation; and just think what it would have been had not sin entered to spoil it! Even in its present state there is much evidence of God's handiwork, where it has not been spoiled through man's touches.

So then, dear young Christian, if God grants you a vacation trip this season, take it from Him with thanksgiving, from Him who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Bring Him into your plans and into all your trip. May your desire be to be found to the glory of Christ at all times, and be ever alert to that which would take you out of the path of obedience and of the fear of God. May eternity declare some fruit to God as the result of your summer's vacation.

We need to remember that while the change and relaxation of a vacation may be beneficial to our bodies and minds, there is never a time to relax our vigilance as Christians - never a time to cease being loyal to Christ. We have a wily foe who never takes a holiday, and we have to be watchful and vigilant against him and his seductions at all times (1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:11).

A vacation should furnish us with a little more time for reading the Word of God or some good ministry, so that we return from it with renewed spiritual vigor as well as bodily blessings. It may also furnish us with some special opportunities to witness for our Lord and Savior, perhaps in our conduct, or by word of mouth, or by the printed gospel message. We strongly recommend that some good gospel tracts find a place in your summer luggage, and that you then seek grace and wisdom for the suitable opportunities to place them.

Happy Thought

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Can Christ see that you and I are clear out of all the positive and negative evil round about us? Do we show as temples of the Holy Spirit that there is One within who can keep no terms whatever with anything that He humbled Himself to the death of the cross to put away?

How little the thought of the blessedness of being part of the one Body, dwells in our souls?

What a thought that there is no promise ever given to Christ, that His members will not have their share of!

He Heareth Us

1 John 5:14

A telephone cable between Canada and Britain was installed. The undersea cable runs from Beaver Harbor, near Halifax, to Widemouth Bay, Cornwall - a distance of 2,800 miles. The cable, less than two inches in diameter, can carry up to 1,840 phone conversations simultaneously.

Some people ridicule prayer, imagining the problems involved in thousands of people around the world praying to God at the same time. But God is omniscient and omnipotent; so there can be no problem in this regard. He hears each prayer, and the line to heaven is never busy!

He Is Coming

Our hope is the personal return of the Lord from heaven to take us up and home to the Father's house. The moral, social, and political signs unmistakably point to the near realization of our hope. He is coming! Are we on the tiptoe of expectation? Are our loins girded and our lights burning? Lord, keep the reality of Thy coming burning brightly in our hearts. Come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20).

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13.

He Satisfieth the Longing Soul

In Psalm 107:9 we read these lovely words: "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." Are we who are Christians, longing souls, hungry souls? Can we say as in Psalm 42, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God"?

Are we longing to know more of the Lord Jesus, longing to "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"? Are we desiring as newborn babes, the sincere milk of the Word that we may grow thereby? If so, we shall be filled. He fills and satisfies the longing soul.

When the Lord Jesus was down here and fed the multitude in the wilderness, He did not merely appease the pangs of hunger, for we read, "They did eat, and were all filled" - satisfied.

God delights in giving. He is the giving God. He has no need to act sparingly, either in temporal or spiritual things. He gives richly, He gives freely. He has given His own Son for us, and with Him will freely give us all we need to enjoy Him, to feed upon Him, to delight in Him. God the Father wants us to find our delight in the One in whom He finds all His delight - His own beloved Son. "He filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

Heavenly Things

“Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Col. 3:1, 2

It is a great thing to remember - what Christians too easily forget - that we are called to the enjoyment of heavenly things, and we live by the revelation of them. God has not introduced grace and His Son and Spirit to make us get along easily in this world - it was not needed - but to bring us to the enjoyment of heavenly things, and to live in them.

Christ in us "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27) was an entirely new thing, and not merely the long-promised glory on earth that has yet to be brought in, but the heavenly glory - glory with Christ above.

His Coming

If there was ever a time in your life when the coming of the Lord was more precious than it is now, then there has been a decline in your soul.

There is no event that need take place before the shout. If I knew the Lord was coming at 8 p.m. and my cow needed milking at 6 p.m., I would milk my cow. Occupy till I come, in spiritual things and necessary things.

How God Judges Sins

God judges sins according to the responsibility of those who are judged. But in the sovereign work of grace God judges of sin in those who approach Him, not according to what becomes man, but what becomes Himself. He dwelt in the midst of Israel, and Israel must be judged according to what becomes God's presence; our privileges are the measure of our responsibility. Men admit to their society what becomes themselves, and do not admit the base and corrupt, allowing their evil, because it is suited to their estate so to act. And is God alone to profane His presence by acting otherwise? Is all the evil which man's corruption leads him into to find its sanction only in the presence of God? No; God must (in order to make us happy by His presence) judge evil, all evil, according to His presence, so as to exclude it from it. Has the moral stupidity, which is the effect of sin, made us ignorant of it in ourselves? Is God to become blind because sin has made us so - to dishonor Himself and make others miserable, and all holy joy impossible everywhere, even in His presence, to let pass the evil? Impossible. No; all is judged, and judged in the believer according to the place grace has brought him into.

God is ignorant of nothing; and evil, however hidden to us, is evil to Him. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." He may have compassion, enlighten by His Spirit, provide a way of approach so that the greatest sinner may come, restore the soul that has wandered, take account of the degree of spiritual light, where light is honestly sought; but that does not change His judgment of evil.

How to Please God

On the footing of responsibility, every creature has failed save One, who was the Creator, whatever might be His lowly condescension in appearing within the ranks of men. And what is the secret of victory for the believer now or of old? We must be above mere humanity in order to walk as saints; yes, in a sense, be above our duty in order rightly to accomplish it. As of old, those only walked blamelessly according to the law, who looked to the Messiah in living faith; so saints now can glorify God in a holy righteous walk, only as they are under grace, not law. The sense of deliverance and perfect favor in the sight of God frees and strengthens the soul where there is the new life; the written word illustrated in Christ is the Christian rule. Therein, not in the Law, is the true transcript of God.

In Thy Youth

"I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth" (1 Kings 18:12). What a blessed statement of Obadiah's! The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and if we know Him as our Savior, and start with true wisdom (the fear of the Lord), our path will be a happy one in serving Him.

We call to mind what a dear old brother, who is now with the Lord, said when addressing a number of young Christians: "You, dear young people, in all the freshness and bloom of youth, remind me of a very beautiful bouquet of flowers. Suppose you desire to present to a dear friend of yours a very beautiful bouquet. You purchase it, and it is so beautiful that you wish to keep it for yourself the first day. The second day you admire it so much that you still keep it; but the third day you notice it is beginning to wither, and you hasten to give the faded bouquet to your friend. Do not treat the Lord this way. Give yourselves to Him while in your vigor and strength. Serve Him with your whole heart. Remember what He has done for you."

O how little do Christian young men and women appreciate the blessing of giving God their youth - their best days - the strongest and heartiest time of their short life. "In thy youth," dear reader, give yourself to God for His service and honor. "In thy youth," be out and out for Christ, a good soldier for Him. Say not in your heart, Why should I not delight myself in the world and its joys as do others? For Jesus, the Son of God beckons you to a nobler life; He calls you to self-sacrifice and devotion, in which you shall have joys beyond all that this poor world ever gave to its servants.

Dear young Christians, the truly happy life is that which is given to the Lord. There are more joys found in His service than in all the pleasures of the world, and we appeal to you, now in your youth, to devote yourselves to Him.

Israel and the Church

Israel was a people according to the flesh, separated in external things from all others, in a particular country which had been assigned to it as its abode.

The Church is a people drawn out of the midst of all others, although dwelling in the midst of them, dispersed over the whole earth, and in which all national characteristics are completely set aside.

Israel's nationality was according to the flesh. Every one who was born of Israelitish parents, circumcision on the eighth day being observed, was an Israelite.

The Church's unity is according to the Spirit. It is neither pedigree according to the flesh, nor any ceremonial which makes a man to be a Christian, but only faith, and the being born of the Spirit.

It Is God Who Gathers

Of old it was God who gathered. See Isa. 11:12: "He shall... gather together the dispersed of Judah." Also Isa. 56:8: "Yet will I gather others to Him." More might be cited to show it is God who gathers.

In the New Testament, Matt. 18:20 shows us that God is still the gatherer of His people. "For where two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in the midst of them." There is only one name for salvation (see Acts 4:12): "None other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is only one name for gathering.

The Holy Spirit will not point sinners to any other name but the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. He will not point believers to any other name for gathering. The denominational and sectarian names will not do. God has only one center of gathering, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus." Matt. 1:21.

Thou name of deep, unfathomed love,

Yea, love and grace unknown!

The wonder of all worlds above,

The glory of God's throne.

Oh, 'tis a name I love to own,

I love to call Him mine;

No other name could e'er atone

Or save my soul, but Thine.

All other names may countless form

A vast variety,

But Thine through ages yet unborn,

One sweet monotony!

Our souls may well this portion claim,

Since but for us - our sin -

Thy name, the blessed saving name,

Of JESUS, ne'er had been.

Thy ancient titles, Son and Word,

Forever stood the same;

But through Thy love for us, blest Lord,

Was known Thy human name.

The cross! the cross! it gave

Thee right To bring us to Thy throne;

And there as precious in Thy sight,

Thy purchased ones wilt own.

There with the joys for which Thou'st died,

Thou canst not want for more;

While all the universe beside

Will wonder and adore.

The name of Jesus brings us into His nature and His work. It is the office of the Spirit through these to reveal Him as a Person. He tells of the love and glory of a personal Christ. Christianity is no abstract theory. It does not consist in mere doctrines or truths, however great. No; the very heartstrings of Christianity are closely entwined around a Person, a glorified Man who is now in heaven, who is not only our salvation, but is the great center and end of all God's purposes and ways. Such is Christianity; it concerns Christ. The beginning and the end - the very soul and center of it - is not so much the truth, or the cross even, but Christ Himself.

And as to ourselves, beloved, who are Christians, such in fact are our affections that we cannot rest merely in a system of truths, or in a book, or even in the Bible, unless it reveals Him.

If we have not Christ, we have nothing. We must know Him and live in the sense of His deep love and grace as a Person. Without such a sense of Him, we grow cold and worldly. We lose all our freshness of soul and power in service. But knowing Him and realizing Him, we have all. Paul, standing on this, exclaimed, "I know whom I have believed." He had no imaginary glory; his was no illusion, no fancy of the brain. His eye was on the Lord Himself, whom he had seen. To his spiritual vision one glorious object alone was ever present. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12.

Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday, and Today and Forever

"ABLE TO SUCCOR

them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18).

"ABLE ALSO TO SAVE

them to the uttermost" (Heb. 7:25).

"ABLE TO MAKE

all grace abound toward you" (2 Cor. 9:8).

"ABLE TO DO

exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

"ABLE TO KEEP

you from falling, and to present you faultless" (Jude 24).

Jesus the Heir of All Things

Read Hebrews 1 and 2

There is a great secret in Heb. 1 and 2. "The Son" being appointed "heir of all things," takes His appointed inheritance as a Redeemer. The inheritance had become lost to man by sin. Adam forfeited it; and it was itself corrupted and under the burden of sin. If it be again inherited, it must be taken with this burden upon it. The Son, appointed Heir, is therefore to take it as a Redeemer, or as One that relieves it of its burden.

The secret or mystery is suggested in Psalm 8, and cited in Heb. 2 There, the Lord Jesus, the Son of man (who is "the Son," the "appointed heir" of chapter 1) is seen with all things put in subjection under Him. But He is seen also to have reached such lordship as One who by the grace of God had tasted death for the inheritance. He is therefore a Redeemer-Inheritor, and not a simple inheritor.

Therefore, we may say to His praise, He will enter the kingdom as a Redeemer-Inheritor, while the inheritance itself will appear there as a redeemed thing. And in this manner He alone will be glorified there, while all around Him or under Him will be in blessing and security. This mystery of the redemption of the inheritance is set forth in Col. 1:20, where Christ is declared to be the Reconciler of all things in heaven and on earth, through the blood of His cross.

And the cross itself bore witness to the same mystery, or His lordship of the world by reason of His death; for His royalty, with which His dominion and inheritance are linked, was there inscribed (and inscribed not to be erased) in all the languages of the nations. There it was made known, therefore, that the crucified One was the King, that the cross was His way and title to the crown (see John 19:19-22).

All this makes "the world to come," or this inheritance of Christ, a new creation; that is. creation under new conditions. In the old creation, all things were "of God," it is true; but they were of God who created them. But in the new, all things are "of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 5:18). All these will witness redemption. The blood of the Lamb of God, and not simply the power of the hand of God, will be traced there.

And this distinguishes the dominions of the second Man from those of the first, or Christ from Adam. Adam received lordship of the creatures from the hand of God at once; Christ, the Son, the Man of Psalm 8, takes it after having been made lower than the angels, that, as man, or in manhood, He might taste death for it.

But there is more in this mystery. The redemption of the inheritance by blood, as we have been speaking, is to be made good by power. Power will have to reduce or rescue the inheritance; or, in other words, clothe the title of Christ with possession.

This action is given to us in the Apocalypse; and it is an action, consequently, conducted by strength on the ground of purchase; that is, conducted by Him who is "the Lion of the tribe of

Judah," and who had already been "the Lamb that was slain" (Rev. 5).

This is to be noticed.

And thus it is, by the action of that book, that "all things" are actually "put in subjection" to Christ. As to "the Son," therefore, the "appointed heir of all things," the Man of Psalm 8, the Lord of "the world to come," we see these things.

The decree which puts all things under Him is recorded in Psalm 8. That decree, commented on in Heb. 2, is declared to be not as yet made good to Him. The action by which this is accomplished (the manner in which all things are made subject to Christ) is given to us in the book of the Apocalypse; and then the results of that action are displayed to us in the pages of prophets and apostles; for there we see that "the world to come," or "the kingdom," or "the inheritance of all things," is in the hand of "the Son." Thus, "the Son" is the "heir of all things"; and after this manner, and in this due time, the inheritance will be His, brought into actual possession.

But in the riches of His grace He will have heirs of this inheritance together with Himself; as we read of the saints, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). Or, as we read in the epistle (chap. 2:10), as the Captain of salvation is also a sanctifier, as our chapter goes on to teach us (v. 11). For if He takes us up, He must take us up with all our burdens likewise. He must charge Himself with us, from the place of our ruins to the place of His glories. And this is just what He has done, as we still further read in verse 16: "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham."

He laid not hold of angels (as the meaning is), but He laid hold of the seed of Abraham. That is, the Son, who is the Christ, made the interests of elect sinners (here called "the seed of Abraham") His care, charging Himself with their blessing, and having respect to them in all His ways and doings till He takes them into the glory, or into the inheritance of all things Ali himself. In all

the successive parts of His history, from the first to the last, He never lets them go. They are always seen with Him.

This, I judge, is the force of those words, "He took on Him the seed of Abraham." And this is necessary to that great mystery, the Sanctifier making the sanctified joint heirs with Himself of the appointed inheritance. And this we find to be so as we read Heb. 1 and 2 throughout. For we there find that we never lose sight of ourselves while we are tracing Him from the beginning to the end of His blessed, mysterious journey. And surely this is a great and precious truth. I would notice this as these two chapters give it to us.

His incarnation. This, of course, was the beginning of His path. But this, we here learn, took place because of us. Because we, the children, were partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise Himself took part of the same (chap. 2:14).

His life and suffering temptation. This, as I may say, followed immediately upon His incarnation. But all His life He went through because of us. It was that He might succor us in our temptations (chap. 2:18).

His victorious death. This closed, as we know, His life of suffering temptation. But this death was likewise for us. It was that He might deliver us who through fear of death were all our lifetime subject to bondage (chap. 2:14, 15).

His ascension. This gloriously succeeded His death and resurrection. But in this He appears also for us. For He took His seat on high as the purger of our sins (chaps. 1:3; 2:9).

5) His present priesthood in heaven. His ascension led Him to this service and dignity. But it is all exercised for us. He makes intercession in the tabernacle for us according to our need (chap. 2:17).

6) His future coming and kingdom. This will be in due season, after the present service on high is over. But on this great occasion, and in this age of the glory, He will still appear for us. As the Captain of salvation He will lead us to this glory, that we may sit with Himself in the sovereignty of all things in the world to come (chap. 2:10).

And thus we see ourselves with Him throughout, All this wondrous journey from the womb of the virgin to the throne of the kingdom. We see ourselves interested in every character which He bears, and in every action or suffering that He fulfills. He is the Incarnate One, the Tempted One, the Dead One, the Risen and Ascended One, the Priest in the heavens, and the Captain of salvation entering the world to come, where the glory is; but in each and all He is either with us or for us.

We are never allowed to lose sight of ourselves or of our interests for a single moment, while tracking His path from the beginning to the end of it. He is "heir of all things"; but we are joint heirs with Him, having been made meet to be so by Himself in the earlier parts of His ways.

We have a fuller, brighter view of all this mystery now, in the light of the day of Heb. 2, than they could have had who walked in the light of Psalm 8 only. But this is of grace and of God also. The light shines brighter and brighter as we pass on through the oracles of God.

And the day is still to come when, with an emphasis beyond even this, it shall be said, "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!"

Judging in the Light of His Coming

We have to judge our whole course down here in the light of His coming. To all I would say. Are you in life and ways like people who wait for their Lord? Like the Thessalonians, occupied with that one thing, can we honestly say, "If Thou, Lord Jesus, hast Thine heart set on coming to gather Thy children home, the sooner the better for us"?

Keep Close

One frequently observes this in the history of Christians: the evils which in later years prove their greatest snares are those against which there is the greatest watchfulness at first. Most happy is it when the spirit of watchfulness increases with our increasing knowledge of the tendencies and capabilities of our hearts. But this is not always the way; on the contrary, how frequently do we find Christians of some years standing indulging in things which at first their consciences would have shrunk from. This may seem to be but a growing out of a legal spirit; should it not rather be viewed as a growing out of a tender and sensitive conscience? To grow in the knowledge of truth is to grow in the knowledge of God, and to grow in the knowledge of God is to grow in practical holiness. The conscience that can let pass without reproof things from which it would formerly have shrunk is, it is much to be feared, instead of being under the action of the truth of God, under the hardening influence of the deceitfulness of sin.

The Knowledge of Christ

It is one thing for a perishing man to be saved by another, but it is something further for him to know the one who saved him; so also it is one thing for a perishing sinner to be saved by Christ, and another thing to go on to know Christ when saved.

This comes out in a very striking manner in Phil. 3 The writer is the Apostle Paul. As Saul of Tarsus previous to his conversion, he had distinguished himself among his fellows by his persistent hatred of the name of Jesus, and determined persecution of those who followed Him. In Acts 26:9-11, when defending himself in the presence of Porcius Festus and King Agrippa, referring to his former manner of life, he says: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."

Again, in Gal. 1:13, 14: "For ye have heard of my conversation" (manner of life) "in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."

And again, in 1 Tim. 1:13: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

And one more example in Acts 22:19, 20, where he repeats what he had confessed to the Lord, saying: "Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee: and when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him."

Now this course that Saul pursued was not that of an ignorant and infidel sinner showing out the natural enmity of his heart against God and His people, but of a learned, religious man, zealous in doing God service, but whose heart was not one whit better (John 16:2). He was a man of good position, enjoying high privileges, and punctilious in his outward observance of the law of God; but instead of these things producing true subjection and love to God while leading in the profession of service to Him, he was using them to his own profit (Gal. 1:14), and had become Satan's stoutest champion in seeking to overthrow the truth.

But in course of time Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, is furnished with letters from the high priest, and starts for Damascus in order to bring them bound to Jerusalem; and as he journeyed, the Lord met him. (Acts 9:1-8; 26:12-18.) A light above the brightness of the sun shone suddenly round about him, and he falls to the earth. But richly as he deserved judgment, it was as his Savior and not his judge that the Lord stopped him on his mad career, so that we find him saying in 1 Tim. 1:14-16: "And the grace of our Lord's exceeding

abundant with faith and love which in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came to the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, it in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." from that time forth Saul of Tarsus (whose name is changed to Paul), forgiven and saved, with the Son of God revealed in him (Gal. 6), leads in heralding the gospel of the grace God. The devil's slave became the Lord's freedman and willing bondsman in the glad tidings.

and now in Phil. 3:4-7 we may learn from own pen the wondrous effect produced upon soul by this mighty change: "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those counted loss for Christ."

How mighty indeed the power of divine grace! He could look round upon his kinsmen after the flesh and say, "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." He had been circumcised the eighth day according to the original institution that God gave to Abraham; he was of the stock of Israel, the privileged earthly people that were not to be reckoned among the nations, and to whom pertained "the option, and the glory, and the covenants, and giving of the law, and the service of God, and

promises" (Rom. 9:4); of the tribe of Benjamin, the youngest and favored son; a Hebrew of the Hebrews, ranking among the highest of his kinsmen; as touching the law, a Pharisee, the strictest sect of the Jews' religion; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church, the body and bride of Christ, the dearest object of His heart; and touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless; a man so strict in his observance of the law of God, that he walked without blame in the midst of his fellows. But then, having summed up all that he might trust in (and things too in which many around still trusted, though far beneath his standard), he gives us their true value in the presence of God (and it was there he had learned it), saying, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Note it well - "loss for Christ." Many slur it over as though it read "gave up for Christ." Such a thought apparently never entered his mind. Gave up! that was not how Paul reckoned. He counted himself a gainer, not a loser; he would have been a loner to go on with these things when he had Christ; he learned the end of the flesh, as well as the putting away of his sins by the death of Christ. To hold to what was ended there was to be a loser both here and hereafter.

These things had been a gain to him as a man in the flesh. He had profited in the Jews' religion above many his equals in his own nation (Gal. 1:14); but now Christ was his Savior and his boast, and God's salvation his profit instead. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

Beloved reader, how is it with you? Is Christ your Savior? If so, how are you looking upon the things that are a gain to you after the flesh? Are you clinging to them at the expense of what is due to Christ? Do you begrudge even giving them up, and retain them with a bad conscience? Is it a difficult task? If so, how far short of counting them loss! Surely if we know a Savior in glory and rightly value Him, it ought not to be so. There was no effort on Paul's part. Everything beneath the

sun had been eclipsed when the light above its brightness had shone round about him. Blinded at his conversion for three days, his eyes were again opened to be fixed upon a new object, a Savior in glory who had saved him, and in whose company he was shortly destined to spend an eternity of bliss. O that we, like him, may be able to say in the sight of God, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

But there is something more. In the next verse we read: "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."

What we have hitherto been dwelling upon was the effect pronounced upon Paul at his conversion, but he is here writing to the saints at Philippi some thirty years or so afterward. In verse 7 he speaks of having counted loss for Christ, things which were a gain to him. This was when he first knew Christ as his Savior; but now he adds, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss." "Yea doubtless," surely; there was no question about it, no hesitation whatever. "I count." For some thirty years he had pursued his undeviating course toward the goal that he had before him. Was he weary and full of regret on account of his self-sacrifice? No; he was occupied with Christ, and superior then, as at starting, to circumstances which, if he had allowed room for the flesh, his heart naturally would have sought after and turned back to.

And not only so, but he counts all things, not merely things which were a gain to him, but all things loss. What for? For Christ as a Savior? No, not even so merely, but more than that, Christ was his Savior still - perfectly true - and salvation in Him was doubtless his joy. But he is not satisfied with that, for he says, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Long had he known Him as his Savior; but here his heart is ravished with the Person who had saved him. This is true devotedness. Men around him might boast of the knowledge of natural things. The arts and sciences, literature, astronomy, geology (things right enough in their places), might attract many; but Paul has an object before him infinitely superior to them all. What is to be compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely, the fairer than the children of men? He knew who his Savior was; but here his whole soul's desire is for "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He is enraptured with the Person of the Christ; he would learn Him, become more intimately acquainted with Him, know more of His excellent moral glories, enjoy still deeper and sweeter communion with Jesus, the Son of God's love; he would have Himself without a rival, alone enshrined in his soul. "Christ Jesus my Lord" - mine, as though He wholly belonged to him. Whatever others might own (and he longed that all saints should own the same), for himself he says, "My Lord."

How many thousands know Christ as their Savior, but there stop, satisfied apparently with getting all they can through His finished work, rejoicing too, it may be, to speak about salvation to others, and yet have no relish in their souls to go on and progress in the knowledge of the One who saved them! Other objects engross their minds more or less to the exclusion of Christ. They are thankful to know Him as a Savior, but shrink from saying, "Christ Jesus my Lord." He is not their all. The will is more or less active, and the world in certain aspects and the things that are in it, more or less attractive; and to own the Lordship of Christ would mean a broken will, henceforth subject to Him, and the world as a worthless thing beneath their feet; but for this they are not prepared. But,

beloved Christian reader, if through these lines your soul should be more occupied with Himself who died for you, they will not have been written in vain.

And note also now in closing what the Apostle adds: "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Christ was no mere doctrine to him, but a living Person in glory that engrossed his soul and more than satisfied his heart. For the knowledge of Him he had suffered the loss of everything that the flesh values, and was enabled after 30 years' experience in the path of faith without it, to count it as so much filth, that he might win Christ, or have Christ for his gain. In this he is an example to every believer in Jesus. May God in His rich grace enable many more to sing with the heart as well as with the lip -

"Oh, fix our earnest gaze

So wholly, Lord, on Thee,

That, with Thy beauty occupied,

We elsewhere none may see."

Such knowledge of Christ, instead of leading to carelessness and license, becomes a true preservative against evil. And the more we know of Him, the more earnest will be the desire that our whole manner of life henceforth should be conformed in every detail to Him. And the more truly too we shall be enabled to say with the Apostle, "To me to live is Christ."

The Latter Times and the Last Days

What is the difference between the "latter times" of 1 Tim. 4 and the "last days" of 2 Tim. 3?

Answer: There are at least three differences between the "latter times" and the "last days."

Different periods of time are contemplated.

The number of people involved is not the same in both. 3) The features that mark the periods are vastly different. We shall consider the differences in this order.

The "latter times" means merely some point of time later than the time of writing the epistle. The full development of these times came about the fourth century, although an evil was showing itself in the Apostle's day, which led to the "latter times" error. We shall notice this more fully in considering the features that mark the "latter times."

The "last days" are what the words imply - the last days of the Christian profession. It does not necessarily mean only a few days, but whatever period of time at the end of this era which shall be marked by its distinctive characters.

In the "latter times" some would depart from the faith. It would not be a general departure, but be limited in scope. There would be false teachers who would propagate lies, which indeed would have their origin in "doctrines of demons," and some would be led astray.

The "last days" are not marked by partial declension but by a general spiritual and moral breakdown - the whole period would bear the impress of giving up the vital elements of Christianity. Indeed, the word "men" at the beginning of the description of the "last days" is indicative of carnality. The Corinthians had been charged with being carnal and walking as men (1 Cor. 3:3). The general state of the whole profession shall have sunk to that of mere nature - "men" - where the conduct of the natural man might be expected.

We shall now consider the distinctive features of the two periods of time.

3) In the "latter times" false teachers with seared consciences would come teaching doctrines of demons. These teachers despised the Creator and rejected His provisions under the pretext of thereby obtaining a greater degree of sanctity. This form of evil was even then in the Apostle's day beginning to show itself. It had its roots in the Gnostic system of error which was imported from oriental mysticism. Gnosticism was known in the East before Christianity began; it was an airy philosophy derived from various Eastern cults. It was named from the Greek word for knowledge and made great pretensions to wisdom and knowledge.

Shortly after the establishment of Christianity the adherents of this metaphysical error began to infiltrate the ranks of Christians. As might be expected, they denied the deity and humanity of the Lord Jesus. The Apostle John warned the saints of those who confess not "Jesus Christ come in flesh" (1 John 4:3; J.N.D. Trans.).

The proponents of this mystic adulteration of the gospel taught that the Christians needed to add something to their faith in Christ - that they needed to follow certain human rules for purification of the flesh. It was against this false doctrine that the Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians when he said, "Ye are complete in Him." What did they need to add to their fitness in Christ? they were already complete in Him.

When the Apostle asked the Colossians, "Why... are ye subject to ordinances"? (chap. 2:20), he was referring to the Gnostic rules for human improvement; such as, "Touch not; taste not; handle not." These things indeed made "a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body;... to the satisfying of the flesh." Man naturally likes a system that makes something of him and his flesh, even though it causes him to neglect his body and treat it harshly. It was "science falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20).

With this background it became easy to introduce a teaching that the body was evil, marriage defiling, and animals eaten as food to be abhorred. So in the "latter times" wicked teachers forbade the saints to marry on the false premise that they would thereby attain greater sanctity. This evil system (known as Manicheism after a Persian magician) treated the body as evil and vile, but the Word of God does not speak of the body as such. The only time that the word "vile" is used of the body is a mistranslation (Phil. 3:21); our bodies are bodies of humiliation at present, for they are not yet glorified. "The body is... for the Lord."

To forbid or despise marriage was to despise God who made the body and instituted the relationship. Fornication or any immoral use of the body is wrong, but marriage is to be held in every way in honor (see Heb. 13:4; J.N.D. Trans.). God will judge those who indulge in unlawful lusts, for He is the 'avenger of all these things.... For God has not called us to uncleanness but in sanctification" (see 1 Thess. 4:3-8; J.N.D. Trans.), but legitimate marriage is of God who said, "It is not good that the man should be alone," and who "from the beginning... made them male and female."

The command to "abstain from meats" was also a thrust at God Himself, for He it was who gave man flesh to eat (Gen. 9:3). God is wiser than men and what He gave and sanctified by His Word does not defile. We might mention, however, that to the children of Israel, who were in a special relationship with Him, there were special instructions given describing "clean and unclean," and which may be eaten and which may not. These regulations have a special spiritual significance for us (for this we refer the reader to Notes on Leviticus by C.H.M.), but the Gentiles never were placed under such restrictions, and in Acts 15 an attempt to introduce Jewish rules for the Christians at Antioch was promptly stopped by the Spirit of God.

Doubtless the celibacy of the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, and the prohibition of meat eating in the Seventh Day Adventist cult stem from the same root. They are both from the error of the "latter times" against which Paul by the Spirit of God wrote.

We would add a word of caution, however. A servant of the Lord may forego marriage because he deems that he cannot fulfill the work the Lord has given him to do and at the same time rightly carry out his responsibilities of marriage. This was the case with Paul, but he did not do it to attain special holiness, nor did he speak disparagingly of marriage; rather, he upheld its divine sanction and admonished that its obligations be not neglected or despised. In seeking elders or overseers

in the Church, married men who had not neglected their responsibilities were the only ones who qualified.

In the same way, a saint may go without food for a time because of earnestness of prayer before God in some exercise of soul, but this is a special fasting and not for the purpose of attaining holiness. Or one may because of ill health have to forego the use of meat, but that is not despising meat "which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." It is well to note the word here regarding thanksgiving. While partaking of the Creator's bountiful provision we are not to forget Him; all is to be received with thankfulness to Him. It has all been sanctified by His Word and will not defile us; we are brought into a position of knowing His will and freely speaking to Him.

The "last days" are described as being difficult or trying times, not because "some shall depart from the faith," but because the whole tone and state of the Christian profession would have fallen. That which named the name of Christ would be largely an empty profession, while the deeds of the heathen world as described in Rom. 1 would be reproduced in Christendom. The empty form of Christianity would be retained to cloak all the unlovely works of the flesh. Each particular vice or evil may have been found at any time to some degree, but all of them together are to be so prevalent as to give a distinct character to the time.

Let us review the list and ask ourselves if we are not actually living in the "last days." "Men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, evil speakers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, profane, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, of unsubdued passions, savage, having no love for what is good, traitors, headlong, of vain pretensions, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; having a form of piety but denying the power of it." 2 Tim. 3:2-5; J.N.D. Trans. Are not these things true now? Is not our day marked by men being lovers of self, money, and pleasure? And remember, this is not the heathen world; it is not China or Russia, where the outward form is thrown off, but the Western nations where we live.

We are living in times of great stress. We rub shoulders with those who claim to be Christians, but who are living to themselves. When we seek to walk as Christians should, as the grace of God has taught us - "soberly, righteously, and godly" - we are laughed at and despised. More and more situations develop which make it hard to stand aloof from the ungodly in school, in the office, in the shop, or elsewhere. Pressures of all kinds increase to have the saints of God join associations for the advancement of various causes: labor, industry, education, etc. Problems multiply with our children forced to attend institutions of public education, and there pressures are applied to have them join this and join that, to attend this and attend that. Parents are urged to open their homes to the literature of the day, much of which is diametrically opposed to the heavenly calling of the Christian. How is the Christian to stand out against all the current of a world headed for destruction in the mask of Christianity? By unswerving obedience to the Word of God, and by asking for wisdom from Him who gives liberally and upbraideth not.

We would say to our inquirer and to all our readers, WE ARE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS. These are times of stress for those who would walk with God. Many dear Christians have succumbed to the baneful influence; many more are weakening under constant and increasing pressure; but the word of God for us, in the same chapter that tells of the trials, is "Continue thou." No matter what happens or who falls in line with the trend, there is never an excuse for us to give up. "Continue"

means to go on, and on, and "thou" is so limited that we cannot pass it off. For all this we need "grace to help in time of need," and we know where it may be found - at the "throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16). PM.

Laying up for Our Children

Are you a mother or a father? Are you repeating the Scriptures to your children diligently, "when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up?" Deut. 6:7. Do you talk to your children about not only the way of salvation, but about the wisdom of God as found in the Word? And do you seek to direct their footsteps into the path where God in grace can bless them, and warm their hearts with the love of Christ, that their lives may be more devoted to Him and His glory? How necessary it is! The parents ought to lay up for the children - not money, brethren. Ah, no. Lay up sound words, sound wisdom; repeat it to them, and plead with them, and pray with them, and intreat them in all fatherly and motherly affection that they may grow in the things of God.

Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled

One of the first elements of obedience is a perfect repose of soul in God; you would not be easily startled by events if you saw all that you have in Christ enabling you to meet everything calmly. Oh! it is simple. Where do you begin? With the heart of Christ! If you have that, let what will come, you are hidden in a secure place - in Him. He is always thinking of you, even while you are occupied only with self.

"Let not your heart be troubled" - there is rest. Outside, there is trouble, trouble, nothing but trouble all round; but if the heart is kept happy, outside experiences do not signify at all. Outside darkness only makes the light within shine brighter.

It is very sweet, the Lord's saying, "Let not your heart be troubled"; sorrows of the wilderness and pilgrim fare there may be, but no need to let the billows of outside circumstances break into your heart. Christ does look upon my heart and yours.

When the martyr was at the stake, the fagots flaming round him, his joy was secure because Christ knew how to make his heart happy.

"I go to prepare a place for you"; what a thought that Christ should be, as it were, jealous of the service of preparing a place for us! - He alone making it ready. Could any one prepare it save Himself? Is that thought of Christ in the Father's house a vital reality to your heart?

How grand it would be if He found hearts under all circumstances untroubled, saying, "I believe in God and in Christ, and my heart is kept happy."

Living Christ in the World

The believer, "through the law," as shown by the Apostle Paul, is "dead to the law," that he may "live unto God." He can say, like Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is his standing before God, and the result upon his outward conduct should be, as with the Apostle, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:19, 20.) He has no longer the law, but Christ for his standard. To live Christ; that is, to reproduce as it were the life of Christ in our own, is true Christian walk. Christ always walked in the Spirit, and if we are walking in the Spirit we "shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh," but shall bring forth those fruits of the Spirit - that "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," which adorn in such rich clusters the life of the blessed Lord. (Gal. 5:20-23.) It is impossible to gather grapes from the thorns of the old nature. Christ is the true vine, the one stock from which fruit for God can be brought forth. Only as we are branches abiding in Him can we bear fruit like His own; only thus is it possible for us "so to walk, even as He walked." (John 15:5 John 2:6.)

These truths are beautifully brought out in the passage now before us. The Apostle having shown how a believer can walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called in the Church, next goes on to indicate how he should carry out the same principle in his conduct toward his fellow men, whether believers or unbelievers. He does not put Gentile converts under law; but while not bringing them onto Jewish ground, he carefully removes them from Gentile. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness [or hardness] of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." v. 17-19.

Such is man, as fallen and left to the guidance of natural conscience and reason. Truly he is "without excuse," for the ignorance is not a guiltless one. "When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." It was because "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" that He "gave them over to a reprobate mind," or a mind void of judgment (Rom. 1:21, 28). So in the passage we are considering. It is "because of the hardness of their heart" that their understanding is darkened, and in their ignorance they are alienated from the life of God. Thus they walk "in the vanity of their mind," the vain, sinful desires and feelings of the natural heart being their only guide. Nor is this all. Corrupt appetites, followed without restraint, soon deaden the conscience and poison the affections so that all right natural feeling is lost. This is the lamentable condition of the Gentile world. They are "past feeling," the restraints of conscience and even decency are removed and, giving themselves over to depraved appetites they "work all uncleanness with greediness." Thus it was with the world before the flood, when the whole earth was filled with "corruption and violence." Thus it was with the cities of the plain till God rained upon them fire and brimstone from heaven. Thus it ever has been when man has been left to Himself to follow the leading of his own evil

heart.

But the Ephesians had, through grace, been brought out of this state of things. They had another guide, as widely removed from mere natural conscience on the one side as from law on the other. "But ye," says the Apostle, "have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness [holiness of truth]." vv. 20-24. These Ephesians had learned not law but Christ. They had by faith heard Him and been taught by - or rather in - Him, according to the truth of which His own life as man had been the perfect and divine manifestation. The truth as it is in Jesus does not mean the doctrinal truth of salvation, but the perfect, holy walk of truth as shown in His Person; for when Jesus is spoken of in this way, it refers to His life and walk here in the world.

The Ephesians had "learned Christ" in the only way in which He can be learned. The natural man may learn of Christ; the spiritual man alone can learn Him. For "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2:14. There must be the hearing ear before Christ's words can be understood. As Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word." John 8:43. The Ephesians had heard Christ, and been instructed in Him. The words that He spoke, "They are spirit and they are life," and they had produced their quickening power on the hearts of these saints. Hence they knew the truth as it showed itself in the spotless, holy life of Jesus.

This was to be practically manifested in their own lives. They belonged no more to the flesh, and therefore their walk was not to be according to the old model - "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." They had done with the old creation as to their standing before God, and were seen in a new creation as quickened together with Christ. This then was to be their new model. Being "renewed" in the spirit of their mind, they were to walk after a new fashion, not according to the law of the old nature, but as having "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness [holiness of truth]." The new man is man in the new creation - the creation which has its head in Christ, the creation which draws its character from Christ. To walk as having put on the new man is therefore to walk as Christ walked; for this new man is created according to God's nature in righteousness and holiness suited to His own truth.

This standard once acknowledged, practical results are to follow; and it is interesting to see how even the most commonplace acts are submitted to this new test. Thus the Apostle says, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another." v. 25. Moral philosophers have discussed the question why men should not lie, and wide differences have existed among them on the subject. But moral philosophy never assigned as a reason anything like what is given here. The life of Christ is to be our rule, not worked out through imitation, but worked out by the fact that we are quickened together with Him, and created anew on His model. This settles the whole question. Who can imagine falsehood from the lips of Him whose words were the words of God, and whose truth was the truth of God? Just as little could falsehood be found in the lips of one who walked in His spirit, showed forth His life.

There is, indeed, another reason given, also characteristic of this epistle, "for we are members one of another." How practical the "one body" is. No man would lie to himself; no man could imagine the hand trying to deceive the foot, or the ears trying to deceive the eyes. Just as little should believers in Christ deceive each other. Being members of Christ, "we are members one of another" - parts, as it were, of the "one new man" which Christ has made us "in Himself."

Living Christ in the World

Eph. 4:17-29

Another result is seen in the next admonition, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil." vv. 26,27. Our Lord was angry with certain persons, "being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (Mark 3:5). There is therefore an anger which is of God, but the abiding wrath which springs from vindictive feeling is not of God. Even the anger kindled by godly indignation against evil may too readily degenerate into fleshly passion. We must beware therefore that in anger we "sin not," and guard against vindictive feeling by watching that the sun goes not down on our wrath. Otherwise the tempter may come in, and we are not to "give place to the devil."

The next exhortation is a little startling from its very obviousness; "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." v. 28. We must remember that the early assemblies were formed of persons just brought out of heathenism with all its abominations, and consisted in part of slaves, an oppressed and degraded class, among whom theft was practiced without scruple or shame. The exhortation too goes beyond open theft, and in principle condemns all taking of unfair advantage, such as even the fuller morality of our own day often but feebly condemns. But the interest of the exhortation lies rather in the motive than in the course of conduct enjoined. If believers had been under the law, a simple appeal to the eighth commandment of the decalogue would have been enough. But we are not under the law, but under grace. What is the obligation then imposed by this position? Not only to do "the righteousness of the law," but a great deal more. Did Christ stop with doing the righteousness of the law? On the contrary, He went far beyond it. The law requires that we should love our neighbor as ourselves, but it does not require us to lay down our lives for our neighbor. This, however, was what Christ did; and if the life of Christ is in us, "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). So extreme a sacrifice may indeed be rarely demanded, but the spirit of it may always be shown. Christ not only did not injure man, but "though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. 8:9. His whole life was one of self-sacrificing love. How beautifully this reappears in Paul - "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you" (2 Cor. 12:15). The Christian should walk in the same path, as he has the same life, not only refraining from stealing or taking unfair advantage, but working to have the means of ministering "to him that needeth."

Thus the Holy Spirit, by one of the simplest exhortations in Scripture, - an exhortation which from its commonplace character might to our blind reasoning seem hardly worthy of a place in such an epistle - brings out one of the most striking differences between law and grace. Law simply prohibits evil; grace delights in doing good. Law is what God demands from man; grace is what God is in Himself. How sad then to see believers who have been brought into liberty and associated with Christ, falling back into the lower class of motives and principles, and putting

themselves again in bondage under a system to which they are declared to be dead by the body of Christ. The whole "righteousness of the law" shone out in the ways of Christ, and will shine out in the ways of one who is abiding in Christ. But how infinitely beyond the grace revealed in every action of that perfect life! And this is what will appear, of course in a vastly inferior degree, but still is a real fruit of abiding in Him and walking in the power of the new life in which we are quickened together with Him.

The same thing may be observed in the next exhortation. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." v. 29. A special class of corrupt communications, such as might be expected from Gentiles who wrought "all uncleanness with greediness," is alluded to in the next chapter; but here the exhortation has a wider scope. "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" asks our Lord of the Jews (Matt. 12:34). A corrupt tree can only bring forth corrupt fruit. The words as well as the works will bear the character of the heart from which they proceed. But it is not enough that the believer merely abstains from corrupt communications, such as naturally belong to "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." He has put on the new man, of which Christ is the perfect representative. Did Christ merely refrain from evil in His conversation? No; His words, like His life, ministered "grace unto the hearers." And so will the words of one who is in communion with Christ. Just so far as we walk after "the new man" will our words resemble the words of Him of whom it is written, "Grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee forever" (Psalm 45:2).

The Lord Is Able to Give Thee Much More

2 Chron. 25:9

It is not the Lord's way to restore to man that which he has forfeited through failure, unless He restores it in a different character. We find this whether in the case of an individual or a nation.

For instance, one who has fed upon the sweet manna turns back again in heart to Egypt, desiring the fleshpots and food of the land of bondage, thus leaving the manna which it loathes. But the soul in such a state finds no sense of rest. Surfeited with Egypt's food, he comes to himself. His spiritual tastes are once more revived; he is again convinced that "bread from heaven" alone can satisfy his hunger, and he returns to the manna. Still he will now find that he is not, as it were, on the same ground as before his failure. There is some difference since his restoration was before that cause. Not that the heart and love of God are changed to him, but he does not, as it were, retrace his steps to the first hour of failure and go on from the point at which his eye, being off Christ, turned to something of the world with a desire after it. But the soul learns God and itself in a new character, and this in order that God may be exalted and self humbled.

It is a solemn thought, I can never regain what I have lost! How important, therefore, to treasure the present character of blessing while it is mine.

But here grace comes in and abounds for the soul. In keeping with God's dispensational dealings from the very first, I learn that He never restores the ruined thing, but brings in something new or better. I also learn that He creates in my soul the necessity which my very failure has produced - the occasion for a new and more blessed manifestation of what He is in Himself than before. His resources are inexhaustible; He is God and not man. My repeated failure only serves, as in the case of Israel's history, to bring to light what God is, and that for me!

Someone has remarked that after the children of Israel despised the manna, its taste was never the same again. At first it was like "wafers made with honey," and afterward like "fresh oil" (Exod. 16:31; Numb. 11:8).

I would remark here what it was that preceded this notice of the change in the taste of the manna, in Numb. 11:5. "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic." Was it not a dangerous retrospect? I do not believe we can be thus engaged, even for a moment, unless self judgment is promptly exercised, without suffering from it. It should be ever "forgetting those things which are behind." If we allow our desires to go back to the domains of our old taskmaster, we too shall be led to imagine that the food we there sought after was eaten "freely," being blinded to the recollection of the vexation of spirit and cruel bondage that the prince of that land laid upon us, while we earned it. Let us not tarry at such an occupation, or we shall loathe the manna. "The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety," and "We are not ignorant of his devices." Lot's wife "looked back." We are on slippery places, while our eyes look not right on, and our eyelids straight before us, unto Jesus who is in the glory.

Martha and Mary

Read Luke 10:38-42

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

The house which we now enter was Martha's. The Spirit of God tells us this, as being characteristic of Martha; and into her house, with all readiness of heart, she receives the Lord and prepares for Him the very best provision it had. His labors and fatigue called for this. Martha well knew that His ways abroad were the ways of the certain Samaritan, who would go on foot that others might ride; and she loves Him too well not to observe and provide for His weariness.

But Mary had no house for Him. She was, in spirit, a stranger like Himself; but she opens a sanctuary for Him, and seats Him there, the Lord of her humble temple. She takes her place at His feet, and hears His word. She knows, as well as Martha, that He was wearied; but she knows also that there was a fullness in Him that could afford to be more wearied still. Her ear and her heart, therefore, still use Him, instead of her hand or her foot ministering to Him. And in these things lay the difference between the sisters. Martha's eye saw His weariness, and would give to Him; Mary's faith apprehended His fullness underneath His weariness, and would draw from Him.

This brings out the mind of the Son of God. The Lord accepts the care of Martha as long as it is simple care and diligence about His present need; but the moment she brings her mind into competition with Mary's she learns His judgment, and is taught to know that Mary by her faith was refreshing Him with a far sweeter feast than all her care and the provision of her house could possibly have supplied.

Mary's faith gave Jesus a sense of His own divine glory. It told Him, that though He was the wearied One, He could still feed and refresh her. She was at His feet, hearing His word. There was no temple there, or light of the sun; but the Son of God was there, and He was everything to her.

This was the honor He prized, and blessedly indeed was she in His secret. When He was thirsty and tired at Jacob's well, He forgot it all in giving out other waters, which no pitcher could have held, or well beside His own supplied; and here Mary brings her soul to the same well, knowing that in spite of all His weariness, it was as full as ever for her use.

And oh, dear brethren, what principles are here disclosed to us! Our God is asserting for Himself the place of supreme power and supreme goodness, and He will have us debtors to Him. Our sense of His fullness is more precious to Him than all the service we can render Him. Entitled, as He is, to more than all creation could give Him, yet above all things does He desire that we should use His love, and draw from His treasures.

The honor which our confidence puts upon Him is His highest honor; for it is the divine glory to be still giving, still blessing, still pouring forth from un-exhaustive fullness. Under the law He had to receive from us, but in the gospel He is giving to us; and the words of the Lord Jesus are these: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). And this place He will fill forever; for, "Without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better" (Heb. 7:7).

Praise shall, it is true, arise to Him from everything that has breath; but forth from Himself and from the seat of His glory shall go the constant flow of blessing, the light to cheer, the waters to refresh, and the leaves of the tree to heal; and our God shall taste His own joy, and display His own glory, in being a Giver forever.

My Cup Runneth Over

Psalm 23:5

There is a process needed in all our souls, that we should be able to say, "My cup runneth over." This is not the experience of the first part of the Psalm. There, in being able to say, "The LORD is my shepherd," it is easy to add, "I shall not want." Accordingly, we find the Shepherd's care expressed in the green pastures and still waters of His providing, that the soul thus invigorated (for this is the meaning of "restore," as food or rest restores) may walk "in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." But in the latter part of the Psalm there is a marked change. The green pastures and waters of rest are no longer present to the soul, but the valley of the shadow of death. This is commonly taken to mean a deathbed. Practically, the experience of this Psalm is often only reached on a deathbed. But it ought not to be so; and that this is not the thought of the passage may be clear from the words, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

There is a greater death than ours to hearts that know the Lord. Surely it is the shadow of His death, the death of Psalm 22, that lies upon the whole scene of this world. The world in which our Lord was crucified is the valley of the shadow of death. Oh! for hearts to be more affected by His death! How far has the whole scene here closed for us, enwrapped in the shadow of that greatest death of all!

What is there then left for us? "THOU art with me." It is the Shepherd Himself proved more to the heart than all His precious care. He is more than all He can give. When the soul reaches this in its growth, shut up to Himself in a world closed to it by His cross, it is not merely that "I shall not want," but "My cup runneth over." He has brought us into the reality and blessedness of His own experience! He Himself, who once as man on earth could say, "The LORD... is the portion of My cup," now fills that cup to overflowing for us.

My Friend

Sol. 5:16

"A FRIEND of publicans and sinners." Luke 7:34 Grace

"A FRIEND loveth at all times." Pro. 17:17 Love

"A FRIEND that sticketh closer than a brother." Pro. 18:24 Constancy

"Faithful are the wounds of a FRIEND." Pro. 27:6 Faithfulness

"Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of a man's FRIEND by hearty counsel." Pro. 27:9 Counsel

"His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my FRIEND."

Song of Songs 5:16 Loveliness

My Substitute

When it comes to the question of what Christ suffered as my substitute, I must leave it to God. Never could I, in the measure of my little mind, conceive in the smallest degree what He suffered when that cry broke from Him, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" No; there I must bow my head and adore.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." God's gift of His Son is the setting forth of His glory throughout eternity. When He is seen on the throne, we shall never lose the thought that, because God used the personal glory of His Son to give weight to the sacrifice, we enter into glory. It is most important ever to remember that we are saved sinners. I could not be in heaven if I forgot when there that I am a saved sinner, forgot the power of the precious blood to wash away every spot of sin. It would not be the heaven of Scripture if I could not there speak about the love and mercy that had cleansed me.

Not Alive in This World

The death of Christ has annulled my existence before God in the flesh. Supposing there is a man who is a thief, and he is put into prison to be punished, and he dies in prison - what is to be done with him? The life that sinned is no longer there to be punished; the man must be buried and be put out of sight. So, speaking of Christ as taking, in grace, the sinner's place, it is said, "In that He died, He died unto sin once." There is an end of the whole thing. And now, the very principle I get, the thought of being dead and alive again, is this perfect law of liberty in which the flesh has no kind of title in any shape or way. You are not alive in the world; you are dead with Christ. How then can you go on as if you were still alive in the world?

Obedience

Christianity substitutes obedience to a Person for that of obedience to a law. In legal obedience a person fulfills a contract which he has undertaken; Christian obedience is like that of a slave to a master whom he loves. He does what he tells him without a will of his own.

If I bid my child do three things, and he does only two of them which he likes to do, and takes his own way in the third, insubjection of will is as much evinced by his disobeying in one point as if he had in all.

Christ's obedience was perfect and is our pattern. He was put through every trial to see if there were in Him an unwillingness to obey - that is sin - and it could not be found. In the Garden of Gethsemane He chose rather to have God's face hidden than fail to obey. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. There is nothing so humble or so unselfish as obedience. It supposes we have no will of our own.

Only and Early

There is a sweet and profitable lesson taught in Psalm 62 and 63. The heart is ever prone to divide its confidence between God and the creature. This will never do. We must "wait... only upon God." "He only" must be our "rock" and our "salvation" and our "defense." This is Psalm 62.

Then we are frequently tempted to look to human aid first, and when that fails we look to God. This will never do either. He must be our first as well as our only resource.

"O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee." This is the way in which the heart should ever treat the blessed God. This is the lesson of Psalm 63. When we have learned the blessedness of seeking God "only," we should be sure to seek Him "early."

The Peacock's Feathers

"Gavest Thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks?" Job 39:13.

Who is there that has not gazed with wonder and admiration at those "goodly wings" with their ever-varying tints, their rich and glorious effects of color and brilliant metallic luster?

Of all the beauteous feathered tribe the peacock is perhaps the most gorgeously arrayed, and we can but admire the beauty of design in the plumage of this creature of God.

But is this pleasure to our eyes, think you, the object to which our attention is drawn in the words before us? I think the One who speaks here would have us consider something deeper.

It was at a time when I was in much weakness and suffering, I was regarding the beauty of some peacock's feathers on the mantelpiece, and the thoughts that came were a comfort to me, and perhaps may be so to some others in affliction.

I considered how all the different particles of coloring matter had traveled from the root of each feather up the long stem and into the tiny multitudinous fibers of which the feather is composed, and were deposited in those fibers with such marvelous accuracy, each tint, each shade just in its right proportion and in its right place. How wonderful that in the journey from root to tip the different pigments do not get mingled, nor yet unduly separated! If either color were out of proportion either in quantity or position, even by a few grains, the harmony of the whole would be marred. But no! not a shade out of place. Each infinitesimal particle fits itself in beautiful order into its appointed fiber with the most minute exactness, and the result is the grand and bright design which we so admire.

Thus, surely, the same Hand that has so magnificently clothed a mere bird, is at work in the daily details of the surroundings of "His own." It is "God that performeth all things for me," and if He manifests such minute exactness in order that the beauty of His handiwork be seen in a bird's feathers, He surely is taking no less care for me. And if not a fiber is permitted to get too much or too little of the blue, the purple, or the gold, so is measured to me each day, each hour, each moment, I may say each varied circumstance, even the most trivial that goes to make up my life.

Oh! what a comfort it is to know that such a Hand is with unerring skill shaping my pathway, measuring each detail of things left out and things brought in, all blending in wisely measured proportion toward the formation of His bright design. Here then let me rest, confident that He who allows no confusion to mar "the goodly wings" of the peacock, will allow nothing untoward to intrude or to mar what He is performing for me. "As for God, His way is perfect," and not only so, but "He maketh my way perfect."

On another occasion the lovely colors themselves seemed to speak to me. There is the bright green, which appears to express freshness, gladness, perhaps praise, the outcome of gladness. We have our happy days when our hearts sing unto Him who has put a new song into our mouth.

Next, the violet in the heart of the pattern always makes me think of that lowly submission to chastening which brings our hearts so closely into touch with His holy love, and makes our suffering days so to partake of heavenly grace.

Blue is the heavenly color, and in one light will be seen helping to form the violet and the green.

Then the more somber brown may perhaps tell us of the ordinary homely days when earthly things seem to predominate, and we see but little that we think of any worth. This is a sort of background for the more vivid tints. Only take it to the light and it will shine with lustrous gold, reminding us of the words of Scripture that "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

But what of those many ribs all along the stalk of each feather, which do not appear to have any part in the beautiful pattern traced out at the tip? May they not remind us of the earlier days of our life before our conversion, when we knew nothing of the work of God in us? Yet when seen in the sunshine, they too will be found to have a golden brightness - "lustered with His love," even when we knew it not. And thus, if looked at in the light of Scripture, where God's precious things are made known, we can discern the halo of His loving kindness and tender mercy over "all the days" of our lives.

A faithful God, "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working," is He with whom we have to do. And why, we may ask, is He taking all this infinite care for us? Ah! He has a bright design indeed. He has purposed that we should be for the glory of His beloved Son. We are dear to Him as belonging to that dear Son, and in the soon coming day something of His glorious image will be seen to have been wrought in us. "When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." "Changed into the same image from glory to glory." "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness."

A Personal Interest

We may receive a benefit from a person, and be assured of a hearty welcome to it, and yet feel ourselves ill at ease in his presence. Gratitude is awakened in the heart very deeply, and yet reserve and uneasiness are felt. It calls for something beyond our assurance of his good will, and of our full welcome to his service, to make us at ease in the presence of a benefactor. And this something, I believe, is the discovery that we have an interest in himself as well as in his ability to serve us.

This delineates, as I judge, the experience of the poor woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5). She knew the Lord's ability to relieve her sorrow, and her hearty welcome to avail herself of it. She therefore comes and takes the virtue out of Him without reserve. But she comes behind Him. This expresses her state of mind. She knows her welcome to His service, but nothing more. But the Lord trains her heart for more. He lets her know that she is interested in Himself, as well as in His power to oblige her. He calls her "daughter." He owns kindred, or relationship, with her. This was the communication which alone was able to remove her fears and trembling. Her rich and mighty patron is her kinsman. This is what her heart needed to know. Without this in the spirit of her mind she would have been still "behind Him"; but this gives her ease. "Go in peace," may then be said, as well as, "Be whole of thy plague." She need not be reserved. Christ does not deal with her as a patron or benefactor (Luke 22:25). She has an interest in Himself, as well as in His power to bless her.

Philippians 3:8

There is something very full in the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ." It is the revelation of an object in heaven, one that man despised on earth; He it is who is there. He is there showing His perfect acceptance, saying the whole question of sin is settled, and here I am occupied with you. Do you know that Christ as a living Person in the glory as Paul did? Is your knowledge of Him the fruit of your intelligence merely, or is it in a God-given power beyond nature?

Is it Jesus you see there, who loved you and gave Himself for you, and allows your heart to be twined around Him as a person to be loved?

Power Not a Guarantee of Order

There is often a disposition to consider that difficulties and disorders among the saints of God are due to a want of government and ministerial power. But no amount of gift, in few or many, can of itself produce holy spiritual order. Disorder is never the result of weakness alone. This, of course, may be taken advantage of, and Satan may tempt men to assume the semblance of a strength they do not possess. No doubt assumption would produce disorder; but weakness simply (where it leads souls, as it should, to spread out their need before the Lord) brings in the gracious action of the Holy Spirit, and the unfailing care of Him who loves His saints and the assembly. It was not so at Corinth. Theirs was rather the display of conscious strength; but at the same time they lacked the fear of God, and the sense of responsibility in the use of what God had given them. They were like children disporting themselves with not a little energy that wrought in vessels which altogether failed in self-judgment. This was a source, and a main source, of the difficulty and disorder at Corinth. It is also of great importance to us, for there are those that continually cry out for increase of power as the one panacea of the Church. What reflecting spiritual mind could doubt that God sees His saints are not able to bear it? Power in the sense in which we are now speaking of it - that is, power in the form of gift - is far from being the deepest need or the gravest desideratum of the saints. Again, is it ever the way of God to display Himself thus in a fallen condition of things? Not that He is restrained, or that He is not sovereign. Not, moreover, that He may not give, and liberally, as suits His own glory; but He gives wisely and holily so as to lead souls now into exercise of conscience and brokenness of spirit, and thus keep and even deepen their sense of that to which God's Church is called, and the state into which it has fallen.

At Corinth there was a wholly different state of things. It was the early rise of the Church of God, if I may so say, among the Gentiles. And there was not wanting an astonishing sample of the power of the Spirit in witness of the victory that Jesus had won over Satan. This was now, or at least should have been, manifested by the Church of God, as at Corinth. But they had lost sight of God's objects. They were occupied with themselves, with one another, with the supernatural energy which grace had conferred on them in the name of the Lord. The Holy Spirit in inspiring the Apostle to write to them in no way weakens the sense of the source and character of that power. He insists on its reality, and reminds them that it was of God; but at the same time he brings in the divine aim in it all. "God," says he, "is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Immediately after, he alludes to the schisms that were then at work among them, and calls on them to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, informing them of the tidings which had reached him through the house of Chloe, that there were contentions among them, some saying, "I am of Paul," others, "I am of Apollos"; some, "I am of Cephas," and others said they were of Christ Himself. There is no abuse to which flesh cannot degrade the truth. But the Apostle knew how to introduce the Lord's name and grace with the grandly simple but weighty facts of His Person and work.

Proof Not Needed

An infidel once said to a servant of Christ who was quoting portion after portion of the Scriptures to him, "Can you prove to me that that is the Word of God?" The man of God replied, "If I ran a sword through your body, would you need any proof of its being a sword?" and went on quoting the Scriptures. Years after, the two met again, and he who had been an infidel had to own that the sword had done its work, and that he needed no further proof that it was the Word of God.

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do!" Heb. 4:12, 13.

The Rejection and Death of the Lord Jesus

Of the four accounts of the Lord's death, in the four gospels, we would invite the reader's attention for a few moments to that given us by the inspired Apostle Matthew, as far as he recites the events which took place from the arrest in the garden to the death on the cross. It is in his narrative that we have the most complete exhibition of what man is, beginning with the disciples and ending with the thieves; and there also we have detailed how God acted after the Lord had died.

The chief priests and scribes and elders of the people were holding a council in the palace of the high priest. What was the purport of their deliberations? Were they desirous to stir up the populous to demand the just execution of Barabbas? Were they making arrangements for a due observance of the approaching feast, or framing regulations for the more effectual putting away of leaven from the midst of the people? Neither righteousness nor holiness prompted their conference. They were taking counsel together how they might capture and have put to death the Lord Jesus. True children of their father the devil, they hesitated not to commit murder and, following the example of the serpent, would effect their purpose by subtlety.

While their plans were as yet unformed, and uncertainty prevailed in the palace, Satan was preparing an instrument in the company of the disciples. Judas, rebuked by the Lord about the ointment six days before the Passover, became the ready tool for His betrayal (John. 12:1-6). Satan entered his heart, and he repaired to the chief priests. And, to show the real character of the rulers in Israel, this agent of Satan finds his natural place to be in their midst, volunteering his services, yet bargaining for his price. The betrayal effected by the defection of one disciple, resulted in the desertion of all, and the subsequent denial of acquaintanceship even with the Lord by Peter, confirmed by curses and oaths. Such is the picture, at this juncture, of that company selected by the Lord to be His attendants on earth, as drawn by one of themselves. They were weighed and found wanting. For, though John was subsequently found at the cross, he, with the rest, had first forsaken Him.

What of the chief priests and scribes, versed professedly in the law of God? The Lord stood before the council presided over by the high priest himself. There surely justice would be administered, and the forms of law be duly observed. But the spirit of justice had fled from the hall of judgment, for the judges became advocates to ensure His condemnation. They sought for false witnesses to put Him to death. To have listened to such knowingly would have been a crime. To seek for them was a heinous crime. Failing to find two witnesses that agreed, they condemned Him for speaking the truth; and, professing a zeal for God, they forgot the decency and decorum which judges should exhibit; they spat in His face, and buffeted Him, and allowed the servants to smite Him.

From Caiaphas He was taken to Pilate who had the power of life and death in his hands; while declaring His innocence, to pander the popular will, he pronounced the sentence of death. He knew He was innocent - he affirmed it again and again - yet set free a notorious robber and murderer, and gave over the Lord to be crucified. Not content with this, he had Him scourged, whom he had most solemnly pronounced to be righteous.

From the hall of judgment to the common hall was another step, which the Lord in His condescension was willing to take. Here fresh indignities were offered Him. Stripped of His own clothes, and arrayed in the mock emblems of royalty, the Roman soldiers, the whole band of them, bowed the knee before Him, and hailed Him as King of the Jews. With a reed for a scepter, thorns for a crown, and a scarlet robe covering Him, they mocked Him, spat on Him, and smote Him on the head. As King they deridingly hailed Him, yet as King they will one day see Him. With a vesture dipped in blood, a rod of iron where they placed a reed, and with many crowns on that head they wounded with the crown of thorns, will He appear, followed by the armies of heaven.

From the common hall to Golgotha was the next change, Simon of Cyrene being compelled to bear His cross. Nailed to the cross, He endured the railings of those who passed by. Who stopped to revile the thieves? None! Yet the passers-by reviled him. The chief priests too mocked Him, with the scribes and elders. Industrious in procuring His condemnation, eager too for His death, their enmity pursued Him even to the cross where they taunted Him with being forsaken of God. It was true He was for a time forsaken, and we can give thanks for it. But which of those who said, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. 27:43), knew the value of their words? It was the bitterest taunt that was levelled at him, and suggested surely by the devil. Matthew alone records it. If any who joined in these words discovered afterward why He had been forsaken, what must their sorrow have been as they remembered what they had said. He was forsaken that we might know evermore the joy of being in the Father's favor. Low indeed had He come down, but He would go lower, for "The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth."

Such was man, as Matthew sets him forth. We read in Luke of the confession of the repentant thief. Matthew tells of the boldness of Joseph of Arimathea, and John of the devotion of Nicodemus, but testified after His death. Of man, before the Lord died, Matthew has nothing good to relate, whether of the disciples, the Jews, the Romans, or the thieves. Till He died, God allowed man to act as he would. During the three hours of supernatural darkness, man seemed overawed, for we read of nothing done to the Lord till, at the close, when He cried out, the sponge full of vinegar was given Him to drink. Before that darkness supervened, man's enmity was fully displayed. The vinegar tasted - this was the last act of indignity submitted to - the last scripture to be fulfilled while He lived received its elucidation and accomplishment, and He died. Beyond this world, man could not pursue the Lord.

Jesus yielded up the ghost, and God immediately began to work; but - let it be pondered over as it deserves - to work in grace. "Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened." No house that we read of was destroyed by that earthquake; no one of that guilty company was killed;

Jerusalem was not engulfed; not an animal, not a dog was hurt. All must have felt the earthquake, but in the temple a wonder was to be seen - the veil was rent. Who witnessed it? It took place at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer, when the incense should have been offered up on the golden altar in front of it. Mysterious it must have seemed as the holy of holies was disclosed to one who had never seen it. From the top to the bottom, from heaven downward, the veil was divided, betokening a divine act, and that immediately on the death of Christ.

From the days of the sojourn at Sinai to the hour of the Lord's crucifixion, a veil dividing the sanctuary into two parts proclaimed man's inability to enter into the holy presence of his God. Adam in the garden after the fall felt this; God at Sinai confirmed it, though teaching by the ceremonial He Himself had appointed that a way might some day be opened. The Lord died, His body was broken, and the veil was rent. God, with His own hand, as it were, tore down what He had commanded Moses to put up, and that while the Lord was still hanging on the cross - a witness to the universe of man's guilt. This was the first act of God after the death of His Son.

One sin was enough, had no sacrifice been found, to shut out man forever from the presence of God. That one sacrifice, when offered up, was enough to open a way into His presence for the vilest of the vile, and even for the perpetrators of that terrible crime. Had God then come forth from the thick darkness and vindicated His Son by the destruction of His murderers, who could have accused Him of injustice or of haste? Instead of that, He then opened a way for the sinner to enter the holiest. None at that moment could have understood the significance of a rent veil. None in the present day should stand for one moment in ignorance or in doubt about its meaning; for the Holy Spirit has declared it, and Heb. 9 and 10 are divine comments and explanations about it.

But further, the rocks were rent. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all speak of the rending of the veil. Matthew alone tells of the earthquake, the riven rocks, and open graves. And this is in keeping; for as we have in this Gospel the darkest picture of man's sinfulness, in connection with the cross, we have also the fullest details of the actings of God in grace after the death of Christ. The rocks were rent-no unnatural accompaniment of an earthquake. But on this occasion there was something unusual, for the graves were opened, and from them (but after His resurrection, as the Evangelist is careful to relate) many bodies of the saints which slept arose and entered the holy city. As first-begotten from the dead, He rose first; but the graves were opened before the stone had covered the mouth of that new tomb, and had been sealed with the seal of authority. The graves were opened, but only bodies of the saints arose. The general result consequent on His death was shown in the opened graves; the special result for God's saints was manifested when saints arose from the dead.

But why this seeming haste? Why was no interval allowed between the giving up of His spirit into the hands of His Father, and these manifestations of what His death had effected? Because the work was a finished work, and God would have sinners believe this. It is true, if Christ had not risen, we should be yet in our sins. Had the grave retained His body, it would have been because He was not spotless and able to make atonement. We have likewise been quickened with Him, and raised up with Him. But ere the sun sank that day beneath the horizon, some fruits of His death were made apparent. God's own hand, we may say, rent the veil; God's own power opened the graves. The sacrifice of His Son offered up, He waited for nothing more. No prayer of man was needed ere He could act. No supplication arose from earth to heaven, praying that the results of a finished work should be announced. Before the Lord was taken down from the cross, before the Roman governor knew He was dead, God by His acts declared some of the blessed consequences of Christ's sacrifice; for what took place inside the city, within the temple, and what was seen in the rocky chambers of the tombs outside Jerusalem, spoke clearly and loudly of the finished character of that work.

Revelation

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16).

Revelation does not tell me that I have a conscience and aspirations; it gives me the answer to them. And this is what I want, and not to be told that I have such. I want the certainty of what God is to answer the need of my soul. I know what He is by the revelation of Himself in Christ. There I find perfect love to me as a poor sinner, and thus have the possibility of truthfulness and honesty in a sin-conscious soul. In Christ I am brought to know Him in perfect peace, as nothing else could make me know Him, love Him, and serve Him.

Revelation 22:17 and 20

Does Christ find your thoughts in unison with the word put forth by "the Spirit and the bride," because you really want Him to come? Not only, as like Stephen, wanting to get away from the stoning into His presence, but the bride wanting the Bridegroom - passing through a dark night, keeping her affections fixed on Him, not by saying, "When Thou comest there will be no more sorrow, no dark shades of night - Thou wilt come to take us home to the Father's house, it is true, but it is Thyself I want; I am the bride and Thou the Bridegroom."

Are you wanting Him to come according to that character of love - not from mere selfishness, but as having such a taste of His glory as the bright and morning Star, and because of being the complement of His joy in the Father's house?

Do you ever yearn for ability to enter into His fuller glory? Is He saying, I cannot take My glory without you to sit down with Me? Ah! am I saying, "It is not the crown, not the glory; it is Thyself, Lord, whom I want"?

The bright and morning Star is an entirely new glory. There were hearts bound to Him when down here, which traced Him up into heaven; and ever since then a people's eyes have looked up, and their hearts have been expecting Him. It is a title of glory connected with the hearts of His people. How blessed for any to say, "I have watched through the night to get the first glimpse of Him; my heart is so attached to the Lord, and all my blessedness so connected with Him, that I cannot help being constantly on the lookout for the first glimpse of Him as He descends from heaven into the air."

If there are people down here, waiting, knowing that Christ is coming to take up the Church, they must be longing for Him to come; otherwise they do not know the position of the bride and the Spirit saying, "Come." The bride is the vessel in which the closest relationship of the Lord Jesus is formed. The child of God has the affections of Christ in his soul, and can only turn from being occupied with Christ in heaven to be occupied with whatever the Lord is occupied with down here. We get our rest amid all things in knowing that He is coming. The Spirit reveals Christ, and speaks of the glory to come. He is the great power for everything in the assembly.

When the light of a returning Lord breaks in upon the soul, how many a want is felt that the heart never knew before! If you could know that the Lord were coming tomorrow, would there not be a thousand thoughts of need in your mind; a looking to see also if there were withal to meet the need of the thirsty. "Let him that is athirst come." This word brings before the soul the thought of need, of parchedness, before that need is felt. It tells thirsty ones that they can come to this Rock which was smitten that the waters might flow forever in order to meet every need. This gushing stream tells of the readiness of Him from whom it flows to fill the thirsting soul.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus." There is exquisite beauty in His word, "Surely I come quickly," being thus immediately taken up by the Spirit and the bride, and answered in language known to faith. (See Rev. 22:17.) Often the very duties of the servant may be allowed to interfere with the bright

burning of this hope in a heart where yet it is burning. It ever burns brightly in the heart of Christ; and as soon as the last members of His body are gathered in, that promise will be fulfilled. If the light only burns with a flickering gleam in my heart, there is ever, in all brightness, in His, the thought of coming quickly. The heart of the individual believer gets its power in the hope of His coming being ever present. We have to judge our ways, our whole course, in the light of it. This (Rev. 22:17) is the only passage in which the Spirit is presented with the bride - very touching it is, connected with wilderness circumstances, the Spirit in that character speaking thus, saying, "Come." What has the bride to do with the wilderness, save as Rebecca passing through it?

It will be a marvelous scene when Christ presents the Church to Himself - when the last Adam takes that bride of His to share His glory. Ah! not only that, but it is oneness with Himself that characterizes us. What the heart feels is the being looked at as belonging to Himself, formed out of Himself, as Eve out of Adam. That the Father sees us not only in a relationship that links us up with the Son of His love in the glory, but in such a relationship that the Lord Jesus could not do without us. The Bridegroom must have the bride up there.

If you follow Him in His course down here from the babe in the manger to the cross, and see Him in resurrection on the throne of God, the circumstances are very different, but ah! it is the same Lord Jesus. It is Himself; He Himself is the object of love, and we know that we are for His own self in the glory. What is the most distinct thing on which the heart rests? It may be the earth-side now which one may see, but when we behold Christ Himself it will be the heaven-side in the full unhindered energy of the Holy Spirit, having hearts responsive to that blessed grace which brought us there.

Ought He not to be jealous if He is not the only object before our souls? He not only says He is "the bright and morning star," but, "Surely I come quickly," presenting Himself with all the savor, all the attractiveness of what He is. Have any of us known Him for years, and have we not found the attractiveness of His beauty deepening in us? What is all we have learned of Him here compared with what it will be to behold Himself, to look on His face - the One who died for us, the One who loved and watched over us from our infancy. Ah, with what tender gentleness He watched over us. Is there not the consciousness in each of our hearts, how often He has given the grace we felt we were standing in need of? But besides that we are to have with His mind in all that meets us in the wilderness, there is another sort of communion - communion with the desire of His heart going forth in "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"! At times our hearts are drooping, we are weary; but what is all we can pass through here if we are consciously able to respond to Him, "Even so, come"! having really communion with that heart of His whose every thought is the Father's will, and who has been waiting over eighteen hundred years to come and take up the people given Him by His Father - He the Bridegroom, they the bride? How blessed to be able to enter into the desire of His heart to the utmost, responding in communion with it, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"!

The Lord in all His dealing now is forming a vessel in which His glory is to be displayed hereafter. Is He able to turn a Saul of Tarsus into a vessel to display His glory? Do I know Him as the One who has picked up me also to mold and fashion me, not for the scene I am now in, but for that scene to which all is now leading us on; for that time when all the saints will be gathered up to form part of that scene in which the glory of God and of the Lamb will be displayed; gathered up there by Christ Himself and put into full association with God! If asked, What am I wanted for in that

scene of glory? the answer is, To be a medium through which that glory is to be displayed.

Will there be any fitness for it in you or me? Yes, surely, but all of Him who is leading a people there, is leading them as overcomers.

Reverence and Godly Fear

Today is for the Christian the day of service. Therefore, any zeal in this direction is good, for God's Word says, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing" (Gal. 4:18).

One has noticed of late among some of the young people an increased desire to reach out to others with the gospel, and some are asking questions as to using "You" instead of "Thou," "Thee," etc. in addressing or speaking of God. Paul's words to the Corinthians, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," has been used as a reason to use language that is more commonly understood.

First of all, let us state emphatically that we are more than thankful for every desire and effort to reach others with the glad tidings, and also with true ministry for the souls of believers. Yet, we feel certain that God very carefully protects the deity of His beloved Son (who is God over all things, blessed forever) and also would warn us that "our God is a consuming fire." The verse preceding this in Heb. 12 exhorts us that "we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." So we clearly learn that respect and honor is always to be paid to God. As the psalmist says, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him." Psalm 89:7. And also, "Holy and reverend in His name" (Psalm 111:9).

As to Paul's words to the Corinthians, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," we notice that he is speaking about himself, not about his language. Paul was willing to spend and be spent for Christ, but never does he speak of God or Christ without deference or reverence.

Mary Magdalene received the wonderful message from Jesus in resurrection, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17); but never should we reverse this and speak of our precious, holy Savior as our brother. The very expression is revolting to us.

On the mount of transfiguration Peter wist not what to say, and of course said the wrong thing. "Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." Mark 9:5. In effect he was putting Jesus on the same level with men. God immediately closed up the scene, and the voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him." What a solemn lesson for us! Surely we should never equate our Lord and Savior with ourselves. Another has said, "God loves intimacy but not familiarity."

Last of all, we would like to encourage every true Christian in His service by saying that full provision and instruction is given for this in the Word of God. "Hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13). "Study to show thyself approved unto God" (2 Tim. 2:15). See also 2 Tim. 3:14-17.

Safe

Traveling once on a train, among my fellow passengers was a little child who romped and was at home with everybody. Had anyone looked at her while she was frolicking thus, he would not have been able to tell to whom she belonged - she seemed to be the property of everyone. But soon the engine gave a loud blast as we plunged into a dark tunnel, and in a moment the child flew like a bird to nestle herself in a lady's lap. I knew then who was her mother. So in the day of prosperity, there may not be very much to tell whom one belongs to, but let him be sent through some dark tunnel of affliction, and you will see at once to whom he belongs.

The Second Coming of the Lord

Watch after watch has passed, and our Lord has not yet come. However, "I come quickly," abides in all its eternal freshness and truth; and long ago the Spirit said, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." How soon then He may be here!

In the first watch of the night (the early days of the Church) there were some saved ones on earth who waited for Him; and, as far as we can gather from the Spirit's record of their state, were so deeply attached to the Lord Jesus as the hope of their hearts that they were ready to open to Him immediately. They "went forth to meet the bridegroom" (Matt. 25). This blessed hope, however, soon declined; it did not last long. Worldly associations and circumstances took hold of their hearts, and so far displaced Christ that the appalling sentence could be truthfully written, "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept"; yes, "all slumbered and slept," so that this bright and blessed hope for a long time was lost.

The time of the second watch arrived and passed away, and the Bridegroom did not come; but "at midnight," the closing moments of the second watch, instead of our Lord coming, He sent forth an awakening cry: "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."

Then our Lord's prophetic words were fulfilled, for there was a general awakening, and hearts in different parts of the earth were stirred toward Him. "Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps." This was "at midnight," at the close of the "second watch," more than a century ago. We are told it was at midnight when this cry went forth, and then it was that the third watch began.

Although for many centuries the blessed hope of our Lord's coming was, speaking generally, lost, yet there was occasionally an individual who had something of the Lord's mind as to this. For example, a friend of the writer's lately copied the following inscription from a monument: "Here lies, expecting the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the body of Henry Clifford, first earl of Cumberland, who died in Skipton Castle, April 22nd, 1542."

The third watch then has not only begun, but now be far advanced. According to the Jewish mode of reckoning, it extended from midnight to three in the morning, when the fourth watch commenced. This was the "cock-crowing." We are therefore now some way into the third watch.

The fourth goes on to the beginning of the day. In the 14th chapter of Matthew, where we see our Lord alone in the mountain praying, and, leaving that, walking on the sea to comfort His disciples, and to bring them safely to their earthly rest and blessing (typical, as we judge, of the Jewish remnant to be brought into blessing after we are translated), it was in the fourth watch of the night.

It is well also to note that while at first they were distressed, they were soon comforted and brought safely to land, and then blessing extended to others on the earth, which we know will be the case with and through the Jewish remnant when the Deliverer comes out of Zion and turns away ungodliness from Jacob.

The Lord's coming for us cannot be far off. Though we look not for events, but for the Lord Himself, yet many events show that "the day," which sets in after the Church is gone, is "approaching." Speaking according to prophetic instruction, the day of the Lord begins at sunrise, or the Lord coming with His saints in manifested glory as "the Sun of righteousness" to bring healing to His ancient people, to shine gloriously on them that fear His name, and to tread down the wicked and make them as ashes under the soles of their feet (Mal. 4:2, 3).

But "the bright and morning star" for which we wait, must be before that. As such, He is the Hope of the Church of God. His last presentation of Himself to His Church on earth, to comfort our hearts and attract them heavenward to Himself, was, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star"; and He added, "Surely I come quickly." What should our warm and constant response to such grace be then but, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"? (Rev. 22:16, 20.)

How very solemn then, as well as cheering, are the words of our Lord, "If He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so {that is, watching}, blessed are those servants."

May we hear His voice to us in these encouraging words, and not only wait for Him, but watch; for, said He, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Mark 13:37.

Self-Occupation

Self-occupation is a great mistake for the Christian. Of course, until a sinner has learned the plague of his own soul, he must be turned in upon himself. Thus he will cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and find salvation and peace in turning to God. So too a Christian must be reminded of himself as long as he thinks there is anything good in him. But when he can say with Paul, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," he is privileged to turn from himself to Christ, to find his all in Him.

And what a relief it is! Instead of thinking about my feelings, my attainments, my work, my dignity - to live in the joy of the Lord, in what He is for us, in letting Him work in us that which is well pleasing in His sight, in the desire that He may be glorified. This is what is meant by the words, "To me to live is Christ"; living is Christ.

Are you thinking of yourself? Then you are in danger of being a Pharisee or being miserable: Do you long to be happy, or holy? Turn to Jesus the Author and Finisher of faith; find your all in Him.

Service on Earth and in Heaven

I have had much joy in the thought that our names are written in heaven. What repose! God makes no mistake; He knows whom He wishes to place there, and it will be suitable; we shall not be unfit for such a place. What joy! and if we have to wait, we have what heaven will not give - to work for the Lord where He is rejected - to serve Him well.

"His servants shall serve Him," it is said in Rev. 22:3; but that service will be either a service of joy and goodness in which we shall be superior to those who profit by it, or a service in which we shall glorify God directly. But it will not be bearing the reproach of Christ in the place where we have the glory of participating in His sufferings, even in a very feeble measure. May He give us to be faithful until He comes!

The Sheaf of Firstfruits

Lev. 23:9-14; Luke 24:44-52

The sheaf of firstfruits was typically Christ risen. "On the morrow after the sabbath" it was waved, and that was the first or resurrection day. In the ordinance of waving it we observe the following particulars:

The Jew (that is, Israel as a nation) was to bring the sheaf to the priest.

The priest was to wave it before the Lord, to be accepted for Israel.

Israel was then to offer a burnt offering with its meat and drink offering.

Israel was not to eat of the new corn in any shape till this was done.

This ordinance, very simple in its materials, was very significant of the way of a believer or of the Church touching the resurrection of Christ, as we see that way presented to us in Luke 24:44-53.

The disciples bring the sheaf; that is, they apprehend and believe the fact of the resurrection (vv. 44, 45).

Christ the true priest teaches them that this resurrection was for them - that the sheaf was accepted of the Lord for them, and He gives them a blessed pledge of this (vv. 46-51).

They make their offerings, because of this, offerings of worship and joy (v. 52).

They know of no eating, no feast, no communion, but in connection with the waved sheaf, or risen Christ. They occupy the temple only as in company with that very story (v. 53).

Such is the simple and direct illustration of the beautiful type, which the earliest moment, I may say, in the experience of the saints after the resurrection of the Lord affords us.

The principal point of attraction, at least at present with me, is in Luke 24:53, connected as it is with Lev. 23:14.

The disciples can do nothing but rejoice in the wave sheaf. It affords them their one commanding, absorbing thought. They fill the temple, not as worshiping Jews with sacrifices and remembrances of sins, but as believing souls with thanksgiving for the resurrection and the remission of sins.

It was the first day of harvest with them. They have lost sight of the temple as the due spot for rendering offerings on the waving of the firstfruits.

And in all this we have another form of owning, as David did in his day, a new place of service (1 Chron. 21). The wave sheaf of Christ risen tells us, like Oman's threshing floor, that "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." David, therefore, could not seek the former altar or the high place at Gibeon; and so the disciples here forgot the old temple, or the temple in all its wonted services, except that which belonged to the first day of harvest.

The resurrection had already done much sweet service for them. It had removed their fears, cleared many a doubt and perplexity, gratified their poor wounded affections, anticipated the toil of their hands at the great stone of the sepulcher, and the value of their spices for the body of their Lord. But now it does the sublimest service of all for them; it changes their religion. As it had already rolled away the heavy stone for them from the door of the sepulcher, so does it now roll away a yoke which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear. It builds a temple for them fairer than Solomon's. They serve now in the sense of the victory of Jesus, in the waving before the Lord of the sheaf of firstfruits accepted for them from the door of the sepulcher, so does it now roll away a yoke which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear. It builds a temple for them fairer than Solomon's. They serve now in the sense of the victory of Jesus, in the waving before the Lord of the sheaf of firstfruits accepted for them. "They... returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." Theirs was now, as the Church's still is, the religion of the victory or resurrection of Christ.

The Shepherd's Voice: Which Will Keep Us, Shrewness?

There are tests of holiness, of truth, of Aspect for the Word of God, which enable a "sheep" to discern the voice of the Good Shepherd. It may not be able to say what another's voice is; but till it recognizes the voice of the Good Shepherd, it fears to follow. A stranger will they not follow, because they know not the voice of strangers.

He who has no such safeguard must judge the thing himself, for himself, by his own acuteness. If the pretender is cleverer than he, he is deceived. How often is this the case! Nay, in many cases he is predisposed by false motives toward error and deceit; for unholy motives and deceit coalesce. At any rate he has no safeguard but his own acuteness, and he may easily fall. Now the godly, serious, simple-hearted man has the safeguard. If it is not what his soul knows as truth, or according to it, he does not receive it. No new truth ever upsets old truth, but builds upon it - they mutually confirm each other. How many shrewd ones receive false Christs! How many simple ones refused the Judases and Theudases, and received Christ! How many clever shrewd men have received the most monstrous imposture ever palmed on infatuated man - that of Mormonism! A simple-hearted believer escapes because he has got what guards him from the motives which lead a man to receive it.... The capacity of shrewdness to escape is not... what places a soul in safety.

Smiling for Love

A small girl of seven had been proudly helping her mother in small kitchen duties. When all was done, the mother looked down at her child with the love-light in her eyes and with a kiss gave words of commendation.

Then the child, looking up into her mother's eyes said softly, "Mother, do you ever smile up at God as you smile down at me - just for love, you know? I do very often. It's so nice just to smile up at God."

Then the mother thought tenderly of the words, "Their faces do always behold the face of My Father."

Solemn Matter

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3)?

It is a serious thing for men to neglect their own salvation, and it is a legitimate thing to reason with them on the hopelessness of the condition which such a neglect involves. But there is something deeper than this presented here; it is the neglect of God's salvation - the neglect of that intervention of mercy which can alone render it possible for any sinner to appear in the presence of God. This is another idea than the neglect of my own well-being. It is the neglect of God, of His glory, of His holiness, of His authority, of His grace, of His love, of the provisions of His mercy, the neglect of the salvation accomplished in sorrow and suffering by His only begotten Son, which is now proclaimed through the testimony of the Holy Spirit sent down from above.

Solomon's Temple: the Altar Equal to the Holiest

(Read 2 Chron. 3:1-4:5)

It would require a large volume to trace fully the glory of Christ as shadowed in this portion of the word. My desire, in this short paper, is to help you with a few thoughts to the closer study of the word of God.

I hope you will not think that I am about to give any supposed authority from Solomon's temple for the building of so-called christian places of worship. The Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Ghost should come, and guide the disciples into all truth. The Holy Ghost did come, and did guide the apostles and the early Church into all truth. And is it not most clear, from the Acts and the Epistles, that the Holy Ghost did not, after He came, guide the Church to build any places of worship on earth? No, not one. The Christian worship is purely spiritual. Wherever believers were found on earth, in spirit they entered heaven itself with their great High Priest, and worshiped in the holiest.

The New Testament Scriptures, however, clearly recognize a spiritual building - of which Solomon's temple, I do not doubt, will be found to be in some interesting particulars a type.

The Epistle to the Ephesians especially describes this risen, heavenly spiritual building. Believers "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. 2:20-22. What a building! and what a builder! "Ye are God's building." (See 1 Cor. 2:8-11.) With these, and many other passages of the Word describing the spiritual building, let us now turn to Solomon's temple for instruction.

And first, the materials of which the temple was built. Great stones and lofty trees. God is pleased thus to picture the two conditions of those whom He brings, and builds, in Christ the heavenly temple. Man is a great sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, and yet he is a lofty Pharisee.

In a former tract, "GREAT STONES AND COSTLY," I have dwelt a little on the exceeding greatness of the power of God to usward, in the raising from the dead the Lord Jesus - the chief corner-stone - and in raising us up, though dead sinners, in Him. Let us now see the way in which the lofty trees of Lebanon were brought to the temple at Jerusalem.

Solomon sent to Hiram, saying, "Send me also cedar trees, fir trees, and Algum trees, out of Lebanon: (for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon;) and, behold, my servants shall be with thy servants, even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build shall be wonderful great." 2 Chron. 2:8, 9. Hiram replied, "We will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need: and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea to Joppa; and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem." v. 16.

Thus there was only one way for every tree used in building the temple. The ax, the ax; stoke after stroke, until the lofty tree lies flat and dead, severed from every root of nature. And then down,

down, down the slopes of Lebanon, right down into the water. It must go into the water at the foot of Lebanon before it can be taken out of the water at Joppa - and it must be put into the water, and taken out of the water, before it can be carried up to Jerusalem's temple. There was no overland route for a single tree.

The ax, the fall, down into the water, symbol of death: out of death into the temple. Could there be a more concise, or striking picture of God's way of bringing man to Himself?

Let us compare it with one or two examples. Now Saul of Tarsus was not only a great sinner - he says, "the chief of sinners" - but he was also the most lofty pharisee that ever waved his head on the moral Lebanon of man. He was a cedar tree of the cedar trees; a fir tree of the fir trees; "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" - never was there a straighter moral fir tree, or more lofty religious cedar. But when the word of God, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, entered his soul, yes, when Jesus said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" the lofty cedar fell flat on the ground. Then did he find that even his religious zeal was his greatest wickedness.

What a felling! What a severing from every fancied root of goodness, from every trust in himself as a natural man! All had to become dross and dung. Down, down, down, until he is nothing, and Christ is all. Yes, for three days in darkness it was down, down to the water, symbol of death, and the lofty Pharisee was buried by baptism into the likeness of the death of Christ. And as the trees were put in the water at the foot of Lebanon, and raised out at Joppa, so Saul was buried with

Christ in death, and the new man Paul was raised out of death, possessed of the new life, even one with the risen Christ.

It was so with the eunuch. The scripture which he read was opened, and stroke after stroke was given; Jesus, the holy One, must needs die for his sins; He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. "His life is taken away from the earth." Where is man's religiousness? Where his lofty pride - if he is so utterly lost in sin that the Son of God must thus come and suffer for his sins? And He has thus come, and has thus suffered even unto death, forsaken of God. The fine straight worshiper from Jerusalem bows his head; he falls down, down; he justified God. He says, Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And again, like our trees of Lebanon, they went down into the water, and came up again out of the water.

Now if you will read carefully the Acts, you will find this was the only way to the spiritual temple of the Holy Ghost: "Hearing, they believed and were baptized." Acts 18:8. Do not forget the only way the trees traveled to Jerusalem. Do not mistake; God's only way of bringing you to Himself is through the death and resurrection of Christ. Read very carefully on this, Rom. 6:3-11. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be

dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I grant you it is a hard struggle to give up all pretensions to righteousness; to be crucified with Christ, dead with Him, buried with Him, into His very death. Many Christians struggle desperately to keep a little footing on Lebanon. What a mistake! Now is it not most blessed to see not only my sins judged on the cross, but all that I am condemned once for all on the cross, and buried with the holy Sin-bearer in the grave of His death. Do not you see that all that can be condemned has been, and is thus, condemned, so that there is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

We shall have to notice shortly where and how these materials were placed in the temple, but having thus seen the route of the trees of the building, let us next notice the building itself with its wondrous lessons of instruction.

When Solomon began to build, God gave him very exact measurements. "The length by cubits after the first measure was threescore cubits and the breadth twenty cubits. And the porch that was in the front, the length of it was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the height an hundred and twenty, and he overlaid it within with pure gold." In verse 8, "He made the most holy house: the length whereof was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits; and the breadth thereof twenty cubits: and he overlaid it with fine gold, amounting to six hundred talents." That is about 3,285,000 pounds.

The first point of measurement I notice is this: The length of the porch, or way into the temple, is according to the breadth of the holiest - twenty cubits. The holy house symbolized the presence of God; and the porch, or way into that presence was according to the divine presence itself. Do you see this? A few of the words of the Lord Jesus will make it plain: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also': and from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him." And again, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

These few words of the Lord Jesus make the matter most clear. The way, or porch, is according to or equal to the holiest. Jesus is the way, and He is equal to the divine presence; for He is God. And he that has seen Jesus, has seen the Father also. God could not have opened a more glorious way to Himself for lost sinners; for the Son of God has died, and risen again, that He may be the way; as it is written, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Heb. 10:19.

Not only was the length of the porch equal to the breadth of the holiest; but what a height! what boldness we have in Jesus to enter! Do you

Before we go on to the next interesting point in the measurement, we will return, and see where the stones and trees were placed in the temple, and thus learn a little more of the counsels of God as to those that are in the spiritual building.

All, whether stones or trees, were overlaid with pure gold. Jesus alone, the righteous One, the righteousness of God, can be set forth or symbolized by "pure gold"; as He says, "I counsel thee to buy of Me pure gold." (Rev. 3.) And not only was every tree and stone overlaid with pure gold,

completely covered out of sight - not a notch of the fir being seen - but also there were "graved cherubim on the walls." Believing God, who "raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification," it (that is, righteousness) is reckoned unto us (Rom. 6). As the pure gold overlaid or covered the trees and stones, so Jesus has been raised from the dead, to be our ever subsisting righteousness. Not a notch of the old tree was to be seen. God could make no mistake; He raised up the Holy One, who had died for our sins, to be in resurrection our everlasting and subsisting righteousness. As God looked in the temple He saw only the pure gold. Even so in the heavenly building in Christ: "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

Furthermore, do you ask, But where are the cherubim graved on the pure gold that covers the wall? Look up by faith at Jesus our subsisting righteousness in the presence of God: what are those wounds on that pure and glorified body? do they not answer to the cherubim graved on the wall? Cherubim in Scripture set forth the consuming judgment of God (Eze. 19), as seraphim are the burning purification of God (Isa. 6), but both are taking action from the fire of the altar: the consuming judgment of God against sin as endured by Jesus, Son of God, on the cross. By this is all the believer's sin put away; or by this, according to this, must the rejecter of Christ be forever under the judgment and wrath of God. The ways of God are equal. He has shown what His wrath against sin is once on Calvary, and can He show less wrath to the lost soul, after rejecting pardon, then He showed His beloved Son when hanging on the accursed tree, the Sin-bearer?

God is just, and the justifier. He who is our everlasting righteousness bears in His own body the marks of the consuming cherubim judgments, once endured for us, on Calvary. This is an all important subject; for the better we know the righteousness of God, the more solid will be our peace.

Just notice how this truth of the cherubim is repeated, and enforced. There is the cherubim graved on the fine gold. He who is our righteousness did first endure the consuming judgment due to sin.

Then "In the most holy house he made two cherubim of image work and overlaid them with gold;" and the utmost care is taken to show that the span of the cherubim's wings was the exact breadth of the holiest. "The wings of these cherubim spread themselves forth twenty cubits; and they stood on their feet, and their faces were inward." Not one cubit short of the breadth of the holiest. Can anything give more solid peace than this: that the consuming judgment of God on sin was according to God's own measure of sin? Not our thought of sin, not our measure: but according to the divine presence - the twenty cubits of the holiest: twenty cubits, the length of the porch: twenty cubits, the breadth of the holiest: and twenty cubits the span of the cherubim's wings. He who was with God, and was God, He is the way; and He bore the divine judgment, according to what God is.

Furthermore: not only were cherubim graved on the wall, and cherubim stretching their wings the full width of the most holy house; but on that veil of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen were wrought cherubim. Nothing short of the divine judgment on sin could open the new way into the holiest; but since Jesus has borne that wrath due to us, sin is now put away, and the veil rent from top to bottom - where man could not by any means be brought, we now have "boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus; by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." What a contrast to the Jews' religion of old! No veil

with wrought cherubim now, to hide God from man, and keep sinful man from God. The blood has been shed; sin is put away. Divine judgment has been executed; the veil is rent, and by one offering everlasting in its efficacy. How loud those types of old spake out the fact that Jesus must needs suffer the atoning death! And our happy place now, in the presence of God, as loudly proclaims the work is done.

Solomon's Temple: the Altar Equal to the Holiest

(Read 2 Chron. 3:1-4:5)

Next, we consider the altar of brass. "Twenty cubits the length thereof, and twenty cubits the breadth thereof, and ten cubits the height thereof." (Chap. 4:1.) Is not this most remarkable? the square of the altar is the exact square of the holiest. Here are two symbols: the one, the holiest - the presence of God; the other, the altar - the cross of Christ. And the one equal to the other. The altar is equal to the holiest: the cross of Christ is equal to all the claims of God. Twenty cubits, by twenty, was the measure of the holiest; and twenty cubits, by twenty, the measure of the altar. And did not every victim that was ever offered on that altar point on to Jesus the Lamb of God? Yes, as the body of the beast was consumed on that altar, and the blood poured out at the foot of that altar, even so on the cross the Son of God bore the divine consuming wrath, in that holy body prepared for Him; His own blood too was poured out at the foot of that cross.

But the measurement of the altar being equal to the holiest, does not this give us a marvelous knowledge both of what the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, really was; and also what it must be to meet the claims of God as to sin and righteousness? I say, must be; for note these measurements were given by instruction. "Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed." The altar must not be one cubit less or more than the holiest.

Does not this direct our thoughts at once to the Person of Christ? Could any other being be found equal to God? For the sacrifice can only be what the person is, or the victim offered. If a bullock or a goat be offered, the sacrifice can only be finite, and makes nothing perfect as to sin before God, for God is infinite. In other words, a finite offering cannot meet the claims of the infinite God. If a finite offering could have put away sin, then the altar would not need to have been equal to the holiest. We are shortsighted, we are blind, as men: but is God shortsighted? is God blind? Can He either under or over estimate anything? How dreadful then is sin, since nothing could put it away from His sight but a sacrifice equal to Himself! The altar must be equal to the holiest.

Let us now solemnly approach this tremendous question, Who is that Holy One, made sin for us, hanging on the forsaken cross, in the midst of that awful darkness? Is He truly man? Yes, truly man; crucified by men, forsaken by God, His soul made an offering for sin. Is He only man? Then His offering can only be finite. Unbelief says, it is so; and hence the need of repeated sacrifices, or continued masses, being offered to God, for the sins, and the souls, of the living and the dead. And all sadly true if He were only man. For if He were only man, then the claims of God have not yet been fully met; and who can tell how much has yet to be added to the one offering of Jesus, before the altar is equal to the holiest? If Jesus is only a man, then work on, you priests - add your thousands of masses - burn fiercely, you fires of purgatory - and strive hard, you children of unbelief, to add your merits and attainments to the work of Jesus: for the altar must be equal to the holiest. But, oh, enough!

God did not spare His own Son (Rom. 8:32). "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:... unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." (Heb. 1:3, 8.) "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 the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth... No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." (John 1:1-18.) "He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins... And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God... for this is the witness of God, which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself... he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life... The Son of God... This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 4; 5) "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. 2:9.)

Now if any man says he does not own the co-equality of the eternal Son with the Father, let him honestly say he does not believe the Scriptures of truth.

Blessed Jesus, I own Thee, though truly man, yet as truly God, over all, blessed for evermore. He that hath seen Thee, hath seen the Father also.

Again, I say, How dreadful is sin, when no one in heaven or earth could be found to offer the atoning sacrifice for sin but He, the Son, who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, who was with God, and was God.

Let us now again look back at the cross. Who is that Holy One bearing the wrath and consuming judgment due to sin? Is He truly man? Yes, truly man. Is He only a finite man? The Son of God! who, though equal with God, has humbled Himself in untold love, love to us; humbled Himself to the shameful death of the cross. Is He truly God? Truly God. He who was with God, the real distinct Person of the Son, but yet truly the self-existent, "was God." Though thus emptying Himself and humbling Himself unto death, yet the glory of His Person is the glory of the cross. The infinite Son of God can only offer an infinite sacrifice.

THE ALTAR IS EQUAL TO THE HOLIEST. The claims of God against the sinner must be fully met, by the death of the Son of God, for the sinner. Now do you not see great value in this type, the altar being the exact measure of the holiest? Nothing short of the sacrifice of an infinite Person could meet the claims of the holy infinite God - more than such an offering could not be.

And now ponder this well; faith links us with this perfect and infinite Savior. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.)

It is not merely our own thoughts of what we are, but God, who knows all we are from first to last; surely He saw all that could be condemned in us. Now if His claims are met on the cross, then most surely our need is met. What has met the infinite must meet and cover the poor finite. A close study of Hebrews will show all this to be most true. There we learn that by the will of God all believers are sanctified "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." We also learn that

this sacrifice can neither be repeated nor continued. For Jesus, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God." And then how infinite its efficacy for all believers: "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." The Holy Ghost is a witness of all this. God in righteousness says, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." There can be no more offering for sin. Nothing can possibly be added to the infinite. Every mass, or pretended sacrifice, is an insult to God - and every doubt is a dishonor cast on Christ. O let us no longer keep at such an unbelieving distance, but let us enter, let us draw near with the boldness that corresponds to the offering of the body, the blood, the atoning death of Jesus. O! the glory of the cross! The altar is equal to the holiest - the righteousness of God is exalted by the one propitiatory sacrifice, equal to Himself. Can anything then destroy the peace which He has made by His death on the cross?

If we are, then, thus forever perfected worshipers by the one infinite sacrifice of Christ, what about our failures? What is the provision for these? Does not failure in a believer interrupt his communion with God? Certainly! Then how is this to be met? This brings us to the "molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about." (2 Chron. 4:2.)

It might be well to notice here that these chapters show us more of the counsels of God, as to the glory of Christ, than man's side of the question; or man's approach to God. Indeed, this had been given in the types of Exodus and Leviticus. A little remembrance of these things is, however, necessary. In man's approach to God, the first thing was the altar, setting forth the cross of Christ - atonement having been made on the altar. Then the next thing was the laver, in which the feet of the priests were to be washed. Then the entrance into the tabernacle.

This is the way now; first, the altar, the cross of Christ - the blood of Jesus which cleanses us from all sin. And when the soldier with a spear pierced His side, forthwith came there out blood and water. There is the blood of atonement. And the water, the washing by the word. There is the death of the Just One, by which we have been brought to God. And there is the living priesthood that maintains us in living communion with God.

We have seen the square of the altar, equal to the square of the holiest. The death of the cross has met all the claims of God to the utmost measure. But then why was the washing laver, or molten sea, round? In this chapter the Lord Jesus reveals to us His present priestly service. The atoning work is done. "It is finished." This priestly work for us is going on. "He took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." The molten sea was round, that is, it had neither beginning nor end, so to speak - everlasting as an emblem. And such is the love of our Great High Priest. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Love that never ceases to wash our feet, to restore our souls.

But why was the molten sea so much less than the altar? Nothing through eternal ages can compare with the cross of Christ. God only can measure it. He, the Infinite, can only fully know that which is infinite; equal to Himself. There is an axiom that holds good here: the greater includes the less; or, as the Apostle expresses it, "MUCH MORE then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; MUCH MORE, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom.

5:9, 10.) Surely this is unspeakably comforting. If we have been reconciled to God by the greatness, by the infinite sacrifice, typified by the altar equal to the holiest, how much more certain that we shall be washed from all daily failure and defilement, as typified by the molten sea. Is it not also true that if He does not wash us, we have no part or lot with Him? For if we are His, He cannot fail to wash our feet, to restore the defiled conscience. Everlasting love cannot fail.

Now are we willing to take this low place, and thus give to Jesus all the glory? Do not say, I am perfect in the flesh; He shall never thus wash me from daily failures. And do not say, if I am saved by the infinite death of Christ, I will practice sin, and will not look to Jesus for holiness of life, for cleanness of feet in my daily walk. Remember that he that practices sin is of the devil.

Do you ask, Is this true, that if we are really saved by the death of the cross, it is MUCH MORE certain that we shall be saved from all defilement to the end? That is exactly what the Holy Ghost is saying to us in these types, and plain scriptures. Why should you doubt God?

Solomon's Temple: the Altar Equal to the Holiest

(Read 2 Chron. 3:1-4:5)

And now look again at this molten sea. Do you see the little oxen cast with the sea, ten in a cubit? And then of course you see those twelve large oxen on which the sea stood. "Three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east." Do you not see patience and strength typified in the ox? We scarcely know this in this land. I remember watching with much interest the patient tread of four large oxen, a little way from P-, drawing a vessel on a canal. Nothing could illustrate more strikingly patient endurance. And have we not found the most amazing patience in our Great High Priest, mighty to save to the uttermost? And oh how He bears with us! - so unlike our bearing with one another. Surely not to overlook our defilements (suffer not such a thought for a moment); but in mercy and faithfulness to wash our feet.

Why did three of the oxen look every way? North, east, west, south? Ah, not a temptation can come against us but the eye of our patient and mighty watching Jesus sees it and knows it before it comes. As I write these lines, or as you read them, Satan may be plotting, or men may be taking counsel against us; but the eye of Jesus sees it all, whether it may be from north, east, west, or south. He who is gone up on high, still watches His little flock in the desert, His few loved ones in the wind-tossed boat. How comforting this is! however great the trial it cannot surprise our patient Deliverer. He saw the temptation coming against Peter, and He saw his fall; yet He says to him, "I have prayed for thee, that

thy faith fail not." Now what love this is,, is it

not? Do you thus know the patient loving heart and watchful eye of Jesus - watching for us every way? We may indeed say, I will not fear what man can do unto me.

Do you say, Well, I mostly look to Him in great trials, to help me in great temptations; but what hinder my soul, and vex it most, are the little worrying trials of life? "The little foxes that spoil the vines." Have you not noticed also those little oxen? not only the great oxen, looking every way; but the patient, watchful care of our tender High Priest, in His preserving, restoring service, over all or in all the little trials of our wilderness path? yes, even though it be ten in every cubit.

And they were cast, when the molten sea was cast. It is the inseparable part of His blessed work, as He says so sweetly, "I am among you as he that serveth." (Luke 22:27.)

But let not this precious word be used as a cover for indifference about evil; as if He lovingly allowed the least evil or defilement. Nothing can be more false or dangerous. He does not allow it; but lovingly takes the towel and girds Himself to serve. He pours the water into the basin, not to allow or overlook evil; but to wash it away, to restore our consciences. The Lord grant that we may do the same to one another in the fear and love of the Lord!

We thus need, and we thus have, Jesus, in the smallest secret failure, as in the strongest temptation, or gross and open sin. The smallest dot of leprosy must be brought to the priest. It cannot be overlooked, without the gravest danger of public dishonor to Christ. Satan is seeking to set this aside: "Oh, it is nothing, it is nothing: the Lord overlooks our faults." And thus the Holy Spirit is grieved. Let us give Jesus His true place in washing our feet. Let us be more real in confessing our sins to Him. God is faithful and just in forgiving our sins, and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

Now do you see why there were large oxen looking every way and little oxen, even "ten in a cubit?" Even thus was the Son of God "made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." Heb. 2:17. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. 4:15. The Captain of our salvation has trodden the road before us in every step; He is made perfect as our Captain through sufferings. "In every point." Therefore He is able to save us from all temptations: be they great, from north, east, west, or south; or be they small, even ten in every cubit of our path.

Do you notice the brim of the molten sea? What are those flowers? Flowers of lilies. It is said in the Song of Songs, "as the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." And again, "He feedeth among the lilies." Does not all this say then, "I must wash your feet, according to what you are in My sight - what I have made you."

There are three things said of Christ. 1) "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." 2) "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." 3) "That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5:25-27.

How fair, how spotless white the lilies of Christ! How sweet the perfume of Christ! Surely if we look at our old condemned, crucified nature, we may well say, "Black as the tents of Kedar." And little washing do these black Arab tents get. But it is just as we know ourselves as the lilies of Christ; as we know our acceptance and completeness in Him, that we can say, "without spot," "no condemnation."

If He feeds among His lilies, our feet must be washed; all defilement must be confessed to Him, and put away, washed by the water of the word - our feet must be washed as becomes His presence; washed according to His thoughts of us, not our thoughts of one another. Oh how little we have of the mind of Christ as to one another! Think of those words, "Forever perfected." "As He is, so are we in this world." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away;

behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God." 2 Cor. 5:17, 18. "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Eph. 1:6.

Now seriously, do you believe that all these statements of God's word are true of every Christian on earth? that every Christian is a lily of Christ? Are you a believer? Have you passed from death unto life? Then I ask, Are these statements of God to you true or false? Do you say, I thought that such scriptures as these pointed to a higher christian life - a state of perfection to which few, very few, attain? "Attain!" did you say? oh! fearful mistake! Is there one thought of attainment either in these types of the temple or in these plain statements of scripture?

The great stones, that were lifted out of the pit with such strength and power, and were made ready before being brought, and built in the temple; was this their own work? and is it the work of great sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, to raise themselves from the dead? or is this the wondrous work of God? see Eph. 2. Or did the lofty trees of Lebanon attain to be cut down, to be rolled down the sides of Lebanon into the sea, and again floated to Joppa, and lifted out of the water, and built in the temple? Was not all this done to them? and the gold that covered them, was this attainment? Did they cover themselves with it?

Oh no, the very opposite; the gold was put over them! And when the proud religious pharisee is cut down, and buried in the death of Christ, and raised out of death with Christ, completely and forever justified in Christ risen, is this attainment? Did not God give His Son to die for our sins? did not He raise Him from the dead, to be our everlasting subsisting righteousness? Now if we believe God, if we believe that all this was of God, and is of God, then where is our foolish notion of attaining to a state of higher perfection than God has given every believer in Christ? This does not call in question, but

Take any one of the above divine statements of the God of all truth. Take this, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Surely that well describes a lily of Christ; so heavenly white and pure from sin that there is nothing that the eye of God can detect and condemn. I do not know that I can state the case stronger or clearer: Nothing to condemn in them that are in Christ Jesus. Can this state be a matter of attainment, when our best righteousness is only filthy rags? Yes, and if we say we have no sin we only deceive ourselves and are liars. Did you ever attain, for one hour, to such a state of love to God and man? - to such holiness of heart, that there was nothing that the eye of God could detect and condemn? Oh! if man could thus attain to sinless holiness, what need was there that the altar should be equal to the holiest? What need was there for the infinite sacrifice of the cross?

I grant you there is something passing wonderful in this declaration of God: there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." How can this be? How? Blessed be God, Scripture answers very simply; the altar must be, and was, equal to the holiest. The cross of Christ met all God's claims against me, the sinner. All that the eye of God could detect in me, my sins, and my sin - all, all that I am, as a fallen sinner - was condemned, as God saw me; so God gave His Son to be condemned for me. Then if all that could be condemned - sins and self - has been condemned, judged to the uttermost, in Christ, how can there be anything left to condemn? All has been judged on the cross!

And more, not only if the old I has been thus crucified, beneath the wrath of God - not only has the old man, I say, thus passed away under the divine judgment on sin, in the Sin-bearer, whose one sacrifice met all the claims of God - but the new man is wholly of God - the new life is the justified life of the risen Christ - the new nature is the new creation of God; and, as we have seen, all things have become new, all is of God. New, and of God: can this be condemned? The old has been condemned: the new cannot be condemned. And "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And since all this is of God, how can it be one's attainments?

And now, before we part, do remember this blessed fact, that every Christian is a spotless lily of Christ. If not, how could every Christian give thanks, that he is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light? See Col. 1:12-14.

Let us not say, Unto Him that loved us, and half-washed us from our sins Shall we not, and can you not say, O reader, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood?" Rev. 1:5. Yes, once a mass of moral corruption, dead in sins (and death is corruption), now washed in the blood of the Lamb, a heaven white lily, having the life and perfume of the risen Christ.

A lily of Christ! what a starting point this is! And what an end, when He who thus loved the Church and gave Himself for it, and has thus sanctified it, in holy separation to God, shall present it to Himself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

The new nature in every believer must and will long to be holy, even as He is holy. The desire will be, that the walk may be in keeping with what we are in His sight. And if we fail, may we go to our Great High Priest, remembering the flowers of lilies in the molten sea.

And when tempted and harassed by the enemy of souls, may we remember that the molten sea was not half the size of the brazen altar. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, MUCH MORE, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Rom. 5:10. If thus reconciled by the death of the infinite Son of God offered on the cross, the sacrifice for sins, remember that, on the authority of God's Word, your final salvation is thus much more certain. Christ is for you in the heavens mighty to save, and the Holy Ghost is dwelling in you consequent on His work being finished to the glory of God.

Solomon's temple, with its types and shadows, has passed away; but the Church, as the dwelling-place of God, shall not pass away. In those coming bright millennial days, it is seen "descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Not one of the great stones, or lofty trees, brought by the Spirit of God, and built into the heavenly temple, can be lost.

Are you saved? Have you been brought to God? Have you passed from death unto life? Has all your religious pride been felled and laid in the dust? Have you been crucified with Christ? Have you been buried with Christ in death? Are you risen with Christ? Is the risen Christ your righteousness, redemption, sanctification, and all? What is the death of Jesus to your soul? Has it glorified God, even about your sins? Do you believe Him to be the Son of God? that His one sacrifice was equal to all the claims of God? Do you believe He is your Great High Priest? Do you need another sacrifice? Do you need another priest?

Oh no! the square of the altar was equal to the square of the holiest! and His priestly loving care knows no end. The brazen sea was round. Unto Jesus, Son of God, be everlasting praise.

A Spring Within

In some old castles are found deep wells meant to supply the garrison in time of siege. An aqueduct bringing water from without would be at the enemy's mercy; but over the well inside, the foe had no power. The peace the world seeks depends on one's surroundings; in time of trouble its sources are cut off, like a spring outside the castle walls. But the peace Christ gives is that of the spring within, most precious in hours of need.

Step by Step

A doctor was once asked by a patient who had met with a serious accident, "Doctor, how long shall I have to lie here?" The answer, "Only one day at a time," taught the patient a precious lesson.

The same lesson God taught His people, and the people of all ages since, through the method of His provision for Israel during their wilderness journey. "The day's portion in its day" (Exod. 16:4; margin). Day by day the manna fell, enough for each day, and no more and no less.

So God promises us not "As thy weeks," or "As thy months," but "As thy DAYS, so shall thy strength be." And that means Monday's grace for Monday, Tuesday's grace for Tuesday, and so on. Why then borrow trouble for the future? We are especially told by the Lord to "take no thought for the morrow." The true rule is to live by the day, to live a life of trust.

The law of divine grace is, "Sufficient unto the day." The law of divine deliverance is, "A very present help." The law of divine guidance is, Step by step.

One who carries a lantern on a dark road at night sees only a step before him. If he takes that step, he carries the lantern forward and that makes another step plain. At length he reaches his destination in safety without once stepping into darkness. The whole way was made light to him, though only a single step of it was made plain at one time. This is the method of God's guidance - one step at a time.

It is a blessed secret, this of living by the day. Anyone can carry his burden, however heavy, till nightfall. Anyone can do his work, however hard, for one day. And in the strength of God, anyone can live trustingly, lovingly, and purely, till the sun goes down. And this is all that life really means to us - just one little day.

"Day by day the manna fell;

Oh! to learn this lesson well."

The manna and the springing well

Suffice for every need;

And Eschol's grapes the story tell

Of where Thy path doth lead.

Strength in Weakness

2 Cor. 12

As to the thorn in the flesh, the Lord was dealing with Paul in grace, and had apprehended him for glory. Paul was now to walk with the Lord on this new ground; but he did not know his own weakness, nor the power of the flesh in him, that would boast itself of the revelations made in grace. The Lord therefore gives him the thorn in the flesh - an aid from Himself to keep the flesh in its right place. Paul did not at first apprehend this, and three times prayed for its removal; then the Lord tells him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Then Paul says, "Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses" (J.N.D. Trans.). Through grace he ranges himself on the side of the Lord's grace and strength, and takes pleasure in the thorn - that which shows his infirmity - instead of struggling against it, and praying for its removal.

Stripped but Blessed

"Perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Such was Job's character, given by God - no mean one, especially as it was earned in what we believe were pre-Abrahamic days, with no general light of revelation.

He was blessed too, as godliness was in those days, with abundance of this world's goods. "And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east."

All was outwardly prosperous, but God chose the best man on the earth (see Job 1:8) to be blessed by discovering Himself to Job, and discovering, necessarily, Job to himself. The steps to this end are intensely interesting.

God asks Satan, "Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth?" Satan in reply says in effect, Strip him and he will curse Thee to Thy face. Satan sought his fall, God sought his blessing; Satan wished him to curse God; God desired that he should abhor himself.

Satan gets leave from God to strip Job. With malignant energy he sets to work, and in one day he brings the greatest man in all the east into abject poverty, and visits him with sore bereavement.

Blow after blow falls upon Job, of such a crushing nature and in such rapidity that one marvels at the comment of the Holy Spirit on his conduct in it all: "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." What self-restraint! What triumph for God so far! What a defeat for Satan who predicted the deep and bitter curse if God touched his possessions! The tongue is an unruly member. Says James, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." And Job, up to this point, behaved perfectly.

Scripture gives us in detail how Satan sought to effect his purpose.

A messenger comes with the serious news that the Sabeans had robbed him of his oxen and asses, and but one servant had escaped to tell the tale. Heavy as the blow was, it only meant that part of his property was gone; but lo! another messenger arrives to say that fire from heaven had burned up his sheep, and yet another tells him that the Chaldeans in three bands had captured his camels.

Poor Job! By no fault of his own, by no carelessness of his, in one moment fortune, wealth, position, are swept away. He is absolutely penniless. Still, wife and children are left him.

But lo! a more crushing blow, heavier than all the rest. A great wind from the wilderness had smitten the four corners of the house in which his sons and daughters were feasting, and had killed them all.

Agonizing as it is for a man to be suddenly stripped and become absolutely poor, it is nothing to the anguish of parting forever from some loved one. At a later date David in anguish wailed as he heard of the death of Bathsheba's child. "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." And years after, the same father lamented with profound pathos over his rebellious but dead son,

"O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

But Job! What shall we say of him? Not one sore bereavement, but ten - all merged into one mighty, overwhelming blow! Not one child, but all! Firstborn and youngest, son and daughter, all gone at one fell swoop!

Still he has health, inestimable boon! But lo! the malignant fiendishness of Satan would touch even that, so eager was he for Job's fall. He hisses into God's ear, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." So God, who worked for Job's good, uses Satan's malignity and gives him power to touch Job's body. Job is smitten with sore boils. In despair he sits down among the ashes, and scrapes himself with a potsherd.

Satan listens for a loud, deep curse from Job's lips. As a last resource he stirs up his wife to give evil advice. "Curse God, and die." But no. Job is master of his tongue, and Satan is baffled. Wonderful triumph for God! Stripped of property, bereaved of family, bereft of health, what more could Satan do? But God sees deeper, and will make Job abhor himself rather than curse God, as Satan tries to bring about.

Then Job's three friends come to comfort him, but they saw his grief was so great that none broke silence for seven days and nights. Oh! the intolerable gloom that fell on Job's spirit - and well it might.

At last Job opened his mouth and cursed his day. Then, through twenty-nine chapters of the

The mouths of the three men are closed - all has been idle talk. Then Elihu's wrath is kindled against Job because he justified himself rather than God, and against his three friends, because, while they had condemned Job, they had found no answer wherewith to convince him. He boldly charges Job with his unrighteousness until the Lord takes up the theme and speaks to Job out of the whirlwind.

In five short verses Job makes answer to God - a contrast to his previous speeches. The crux of the whole lies in this: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Personal dealing with God makes him a little man in his own eyes, even to the abhorrence of himself.

It was just this personal dealing with God that made Saul of Tarsus, with all his righteousness and zeal, speak of himself as chief of sinners; that made Isaiah confess that he was undone; that counsels the most upright and moral to acknowledge that even his "righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

This is the only road to true greatness; for when Job had arrived at this point God gave him a double portion, so that his latter end was more blessed than his beginning. Thus it ever is.

Whether we are stripped of human righteousness as sinners, or stripped of self-complacency as saints, the end is always for blessing, and the truly great before God are the truly small in their own eyes.

It is all beautifully summed up by James when says, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

Those who are enduring the stripping process, let them be encouraged by this prospect of pure blessing - "the end of the Lord." He "is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." If exercised, Satan will not gain the advantage; God will gain the glory, and we shall gain the blessing.

Suffering and Glory

Suffering first, glory follows. Take courage, my soul. "A little while" and glory will fill the wide, wide regions of thy Lord's dominions. And being with Him, thou shalt be at the center of it all. Conflict ceases there. Here grace has to struggle with our evil in many ways, and sometimes it may seem doubtful which is to win the day; but the Lord gives more grace, and it always triumphs. But there, no evil can ever be, either to dispute or divide the scene with glory. Then the days of evil will be past, and past forever. Then the Lord of glory will have everything His own way - He will form and fashion everything after His own mind - He will keep everything under His own hand, and stamp everything with His own glorious image. It will then be glory, glory, GLORY.

Suited Ministry: Milk or Meat

What is the suited ministry for believers generally at the present time?

A scripture often cited in answer to this question is in 1 Peter: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Chap. 2:2. It is contended by many that this means that "milk is the suited aliment for the young believer. To say nothing of the character of the word used (albeit it is very difficult of translation), the point in the scripture is simply that just as newborn babes desire milk, the believer should long for the Word of God.

If we now turn to another passage, we shall obtain further light upon our subject. The Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians says, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as {according to} men?" 1 Cor. 3:2, 3. It is clear in this case that the Apostle fed these believers with "milk" because of their bad condition - that he deplored the necessity for doing so - and that had they been responding more fully to God's grace and love in redemption he would have fed them with "meat," and not with "milk." To assume, therefore, that the saints need "milk" is to proceed upon the supposition that they are in a Corinthian state; and to make provision for it is even to foster the condition which all should deplore. We learn moreover that the ministry suited to one assembly may be entirely unsuited to another; and the question may well be pressed home at such a moment upon the hearts of teachers, whether there has been the sufficient exercise of spiritual discernment as to the state of souls, as a guide to their ministry. Nothing is plainer than that it would be an utter mistake to deal out Ephesian truth to a Corinthian assembly, or Corinthian truth to an Ephesian assembly.

Another scripture may be adduced to aid us in our investigation. Commencing to speak of Melchizedek, the Apostle turns aside to add, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." Heb. 5:11-14; 6:1.

There are several points here which need very earnest attention. The Apostle mourns over the saints' inability to receive the truth he had to communicate. When for the time they had been Christians they might have been teachers, it was necessary to go back to the elements of truth; for they had become such as had need of milk - proof that they were unskillful in the use of the Word, and had become dwarfed in their growth. They were babes still, and hence the fervent exhortation with which chapter 6 opens. In a word, these dear saints were unwilling to go forward; and who that had the mind of Christ could be satisfied with such a condition? What teacher could calmly accept their state, and go on feeding them with milk, as if nothing more were necessary?

Surely we do well to attend to these solemn warning words, for might they not be addressed with equal reason to many believers in this day? Are there not hundreds - no, thousands - who never care for anything beyond the gospel? Sad were it indeed if any saint of God ceased to have fellowship with the glad tidings of the grace of God. That which occupies the heart of God Himself may well occupy the hearts of His people. But this does not involve our feeding on nothing but the gospel or the simplest elements of the truth. By no means; for we need Christ in every character, aspect, and office in which He is presented; and if we fail to recognize this, we shall speedily become as dwarfed as were these Hebrew believers.

It will certainly be replied, But remember how many newly converted souls there are. These are truly babes, and would you not feed them with "milk"? The Word of God is our only guide, and we have two instances at least of the way in which the Spirit of God ministers to such. The epistles to the Thessalonians were written soon after the Church there had been formed - both probably within a year after the saints had been turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). And what do we find? In the first epistle we have the return of our blessed Lord presented in every variety of aspect, and this too distinguished from His coming to the world, besides a great deal of practical instruction for the building up of these saints on their most holy faith. In the second epistle the Apostle goes still further, and teaches the full character of the appearing of Christ, the truth of the man of sin, the blessed fact that the Church must be caught away from this scene before this son of perdition is revealed, etc. Now these can scarcely be termed elementary subjects, but they were intended for the instruction and comfort of these "babes," and were indeed necessary to them for the understanding of Christianity.

We have another example in John's first epistle. Dividing the whole family of God into fathers, young men, and babes, in what manner does he address this last class, the youngest of God's children? "Little children," he commences, "it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come," etc. Chap. 2:18. He then proceeds to point out the danger arising from antichrists having already appeared. He puts them on their guard by giving the marks of the antichrist, and leads them to the source of their safety in their having the unction of the Holy One and the Word of God. It is, in fact, a remarkable correspondence with the teaching of Paul in 2 Thessalonians.

Here then we have divine wisdom to guide us in teaching "babes." They must be nourished with the Word of God; they must be fortified against danger by the revelations and warnings which it provides; and they must have a whole Christ - Christ in all that He is in Himself, in all that He is to God, and in all that He is to them, unfolded - that they may grow thereby. This is a very different thing from occupying them with questions and controversies instead of Christ; and it may be added that the maintenance of simplicity in the manner of instruction is entirely consistent with leading souls on in the knowledge of their portion in Christ, as well as of the dangers of the path. But the divine treasures should not be forever withholden from the saints. Are we to surrender, even for the babes, the truth of death and resurrection with Christ? If so, the foundations of Christianity are gone, and we shall easily - speedily - fall back to Jewish ground and to a Jewish experience.

May the Lord make us all, whatever our stage of growth, increasingly desirous of following after, if that we may apprehend that for which also we are apprehended of Christ Jesus!

Tell the Good News

Hulme, the great naturalist, tells us that if a single wasp discovers a deposit of honey or other food, he will return to his nest and impart the good news to his companions who will sally forth in great numbers to partake of the fare which has been discovered for them.

Shall we who have made a greater discovery, even the fountain of living waters, not seek to impart to others this knowledge? Shall we be less considerate of our fellow men than wasps are of their fellow insects? Ought not we to act like the woman of Samaria, and go and tell the good news to others?

"As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." Rom. 10:15.

The Testimony of John the Baptist: the Voice of One Crying

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness' (Isa. 40) is an evident allusion to John the Baptist who was "sent from God" to bear witness of the True Light and prepare a way for the Messiah. In the midst of his testimony he was slain. Messiah too came, and in the midst of His testimony He was slain. Master and servant, they were both cut off by wicked hands. Thus God's work was, as far as man could see, nipped in the bud; and hence the world is yet in misrule and confusion, in sin and misery. When God really fulfills for the earth what He has at heart, there will be the manifest power of ordered blessing to His glory.

But look up, not down, and read in the risen and glorified Christ the proof to faith that the cross, the very thing that seemed the total ruin of all the counsels of God, is in truth their solid basis and justification by which He is and will be forever glorified. The cross of the Lord Jesus is the triumph of grace, as the resurrection and ascension are its righteous answer; but it is a triumph known only to faith. The world sees not heaven opened nor Him glorified there; it saw in the cross One who suffered to death.

In the Acts of the Apostles man's rejection of Christ is constantly contrasted with God's raising Him from the dead. There we see that man and God are in complete opposition. The cross is thus looked at in the light not of God's purposes, but of man's wickedness. In the epistles the truth chiefly insisted on is the cross, not so much as the extreme point of all man has done against God, but as the deepest exercise of the grace that God feels toward guilty man. Not that love was created by the cross; it was in God before the coming of Christ, and because of it He sent His Son. The propitiation is the fruit of God's grace, not its cause. Propitiation vindicates it, judging and putting aside all the sin on man's part, which otherwise would have proved an insurmountable barrier. But the love was on God's part from everlasting. We must bear this in mind on looking at propitiation, which indeed is the strongest possible proof of His love, while it equally proves His holiness and necessary judgment of our sins.

John's testimony was a call to repentance in view of Messiah's advent; his baptism therefore was a confession both of sins and of Him who should come after himself. It was "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isa. 40:3; J.N.D. Trans.) It was not the person nor the work of Israel's hope in power. For Israel as a whole was blind and deaf; the testimony was interrupted, the Messiah refused. There was therefore but a partial application, the people's unbelief thus intercepting and breaking off the thread of God's ways, while His counsels abide irrefragable and accomplished, through their unbelief, in the cross as they never else could have been. The way of Jehovah was not yet prepared, nor was there a straight highway in the desert for God. Man was put in his responsibility and heard the cry, only to sin; by-and-by God will make all good in grace by His own power. Then "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the LORD [Jehovah] shall be revealed, and all flesh [not Israel only] shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD [Jehovah]

hath spoken it." vv. 4, 5.

Thus plainly we have, as far as its scope goes, the sure purpose of God. Every difficulty, depths, heights, rough or crooked, all must disappear; for God yet means to make this earth the scene of His glory. A most blessed prospect it is, that the sin, misery, and weakness of man, the groaning of all creation around, the wiles and power and presence of Satan must vanish and give place, not to the revealed grace of God in Christ, which has shone (we know) in the despised Nazarene, but to the revealed glory of Jehovah, when all flesh shall see it together. It cannot refer to the day of the judgment of the dead, because it will not be "all flesh" nor any flesh whatever, but the dead raised before the great white throne. But here it is a question of man living in his natural body on the earth. The Jew was apt to overlook the judgment of the dead at the end of all dispensations; the Gentile is just as negligent as to the judgment of the quick, though it be confessed in the commonest symbols of Christendom. As infidelity increases, the rejection of this truth is perhaps more complete now than ever since the gospel was preached to the Gentiles.

In the dark ages people at least believed enough to be panic-struck from time to time; but now Christians are accounted fanatics if they testify of these coming judgments. But nonetheless God will cut short the course of this world, and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed so that all flesh shall see it together. This John the Baptist had to announce; only the first word committed to him, and already accomplished in its measure, was the preparing the way of Jehovah.

"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry?" Here follows the substance of John the Baptist's testimony, though it may be still more repentance, a work wrought in their souls by the Word of God applied by the Holy Spirit, as manifest in the end of this age. "All flesh is as grass"; it is man morally and universally. "And all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field" (v. 6). Could a man use this to think well of himself? Verse 7 cuts down all boasting - "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit [or breath] or the LORD [Jehovah] bloweth upon it." Not its beauty but its frailty God refers to. The moment you have God's testing its character, if it were only by the breath of His nostrils, all flesh comes to nothing; and this too in Israel, not in Gentiles only; "surely the people is grass." Nor is this all; He utters its sentence again and again. The reason for the first repetition seems to be the emphatic judgment of "the people"; this is, the Jews. The second is particularly connected with the resource for faith. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever." v. 8.

Thus the reception of the Messiah and His reign over Israel by-and-by are conditioned by their repentance, a work wrought in their souls by the Word of God applied by the Holy Spirit, as Nicodemus had to learn from our Lord in John 3 - so the Christian proves yet more profoundly under the gospel, and receives eternal life in the Son of God - so much the Jew in due time for the future world kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. These two truths are of no less importance at the present moment, as we know how Peter used them for the Christian Jews from the first. They will be urgently needed when God begins to work in the Jews once more, when they painfully learn, feel, and prove the utter worthlessness of man as he is in divine things. Even now the men of the world are making no small strides, but they will do greater things. And the devil will mature and display his plans as they have never been witnessed in the world before. What then will be the security of faith? "The word of our God shall stand forever."

It may seem a weak thing to confide in for eternity; but in truth it is more stable than heaven and earth. So in 2 Tim. 3 the Apostle, anticipating the ruin of Christendom, casts the man of God on this unfailing resource.

Types in Chronicles

In the first book of Chronicles we see David in a light different from that in which we see him in the books of Samuel. In the books of Samuel we get his history generally, but in the first book of Chronicles, we see him not in all the events of his life as in Samuel, but in those scenes and actions which constituted him a type of the Lord who is David's Son. And so, in the second book of Chronicles, as to Solomon. We do not get his full history there, as in the first book of Kings. All his sins are passed by. For it is not as his historian that the Spirit of God was employing the pen of the scribe, while tracing Solomon in the Chronicles, but rather setting him forth as the type of the Son of David, the king of Israel, in His full beauty, the boast of His own people, and the Object of the whole earth's desire.

Under the Surface

When the young man in the Gospel came to Jesus and said, "Speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me," He replied, "Who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" He leaves the question of right according to man (for it was right that he should have that which belonged to him), and shows what is under the surface: "Beware of covetousness." The Lord is our pattern in everything, and when the Lord is the pattern, it detects the motives of the heart; so He said, "Beware of covetousness." The one desired to have it, the other desired not to give it up. Take care that the motive and spring of conduct is God, and not self. There He strikes at the principles of covetousness; there must be that state of heart in which God is the spring of the will.

The Vocation Wherewith Ye Are Called

What is the position that as believers we have been brought into, the vocation wherewith we have been called? Is it not that which was according to God's purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9)? Are not those who compose the assembly a heavenly people, united to Christ the Head in heaven (Heb. 3:1; John 17:16; Col. 2:10)? Have they not been reconciled to God in one body where they have "access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Col. 1:12-27; Eph. 2:18)? Are they not a called-out fellowship, a divine organism, "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22; 1 Cor. 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:16)?

Such a testimony makes nothing of us here; it does not give us a place in this world, but it connects us with Christ the second Man in heaven (1 Cor. 15:57, 58) and makes us strangers and pilgrims on earth (1 Pet. 2:11). We know our connection with Jesus Christ risen from the dead, according to Paul's gospel (2 Tim. 2:8), and we do not belong to anything here. Our links are broken with everything earthly of a religious nature, and we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). It is a heavenly testimony now of which we are to be the representatives.

Water in the Word

John 3:5

Water is the symbol of the Word of God applied to the soul, in power, by the Spirit of God. A reference to other scriptures will prove this.

Compare the expression we are considering in John 3:5, "born of water," with Jas. 1:18, where we read, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth"; and with 1 Pet. 1:23, which reads, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." Then turn to Eph. 5:26, where we find the water definitely identified with the Word in the expression, "the washing of water by the word."

Water purifies; hence by the use of the symbol more is conveyed than if it had been simply said "born of the word." It includes the effect produced, as well as the instrumentality used of God in this, the beginning of all His ways with us in grace.

In the types, water has as large a place as the blood. Both flowed from the pierced side of the Lord Jesus in death (John 19:34). This is the historic order, and in it the blood comes first, as the basis of everything for God's glory and our blessing. In the order of application to us, as John in his epistle (chap. 5:6) gives it, the water comes first, "This is He that came by water and blood.... And it is the Spirit that beareth witness." The Spirit it is who applies the Word to the conscience, by which mighty operation of sovereign grace we are born absolutely anew. The effect in us is the conviction of sins; and when faith rests on the testimony of the Spirit to the value of the blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin, He (the Spirit) can take up His dwelling place in us to be the power of the enjoyment of all that we have been brought into by the water and the blood; and the Christian position is then complete.

But fastening our attention on the water, it is important to see that there is a double application of what it represents as in John 13:10: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." There is first, as we have seen, being "born of water and of the Spirit"; this answers to the first washing mentioned here, and, as it is the communication of a new life and nature, cannot be repeated; we are "clean every whit." Nor is this by any change in the character of the flesh in us; "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and there can be no purification of it. The Word applied by the Spirit to our souls carries with it the sentence of death upon all that is of the flesh. God could do nothing with it but end it in judgment (Gen. 6:13), a judgment He carried out for faith in the death of His Son (Rom. 8:3). Thus the water was found where the blood was, in His death. It is, on the one hand, the end of the flesh in total condemnation, and on the other, the introduction of a life in which we can live to God and enjoy Him forever.

But we have to pass with this life through a defiling world, where all that meets the senses tends to hinder communion with Him who is our life. Hence the need of the second application of the Word, symbolized by the Lord's touching service to His disciples (John 13). He girded Himself with the towel, and, pouring water into a basin, He began to wash their feet, and wipe them with the towel

wherewith He was girded. It was, as Jesus tells Peter, that we might have "part" with Him when He is gone, that is, as having departed out of the world to the Father.

We have to go through the world out of which He has had to depart, and therein lies all our need, as we are liable to contract defilement at every step, or at least that which would bring moral distance between our souls and Him. He knows how to apply His word to bring back the soul to the enjoyment of His presence, in His ever faithful and unfailing love, that there may not be even a shade of reserve between us and Him. That first action of His word by which we were clean every whit in the divine nature could never be repeated; this is needed continually. Nor does He leave us to apply it to ourselves ("If I wash thee not"), though He may use any of us who have learned in the school of His grace, in this privileged service to others (v. 14).

It is of interest, as helping to bring out the distinction all the more clearly, that the Lord employs two different words in this 10th verse according to their clearly defined usage in the Greek version of the Old Testament. "He that is washed [or "bathed"]", as applicable to the whole person, is the word *louo*, used of the washing of the priests on the day of their consecration (Exod. 29:4). "Needeth not save to wash [nipto} his feet," is that used for the washing of their hands and their feet in the laver at the tabernacle door, every time they went into the sanctuary (Exod. 30:18, 21). And the words are never interchanged. But, in noting this, we must remember the difference between preparation for priestly entering into the holy place, as in the Old Testament, and this wonderful service of the Lord for us that we may have the constant enjoyment of His presence as having gone to the Father.

May our hearts be more deeply affected by the love that would not leave a spot on our feet; and may we yield ourselves up to the searching action of His Word upon us, when it is needed that He should apply it, rather than be content to walk at a distance from Him, clinging to something that maintains that distance, to His dishonor and our own incalculable loss.

Weapons of Destruction

The frequency with which greater and greater weapons of destruction are being developed should remind us of the sway which Satan exercises in the affairs of men. He is at present the god and prince of this world, and is called "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children [sons] of disobedience." Eph. 2:2. He is truly "Apollyon," the destroyer. The Lord Jesus came to save men's lives, not to destroy them, but Him they refused and crucified. They preferred a murderer and a robber - Barabbas - Satan's counterfeit at the time, for his name meant "son of the father." Satan moved the world against Christ, and now he is moving the world to the brink of its own destruction.

The tremendous increase in the means of wholesale slaughter, within only a decade, is truly astounding - surely a sign that we are living in the last hour of this dispensation. And if we compare the destructive force of the weapons used in the first world war with those now being produced, it makes the former seem like bows and arrows. Even the second world war began without a great increase in weapon power.

In the first world war, TNT was developed and hailed as the great destroyer, but not until the second war was well advanced was this packed into huge bombs, called blockbusters, and rained from the skies in large quantities. The following figures will give some idea of the rapid increase: the blockbuster of 1942 contained TNT to the amount of

20 tons;

the Hiroshima A-bomb of 1945 contained a comparative explosive force of

20,000 tons;

the H-bomb of 1952,

5,000,000 tons;

the calculated power of the 1954 H-bomb,

40,000,000 tons.

Man, a comparatively very small creature in the universe, has been able to understand many of its mysteries, and to set off H-bomb explosions similar to the great burning within the sun. Truly the scientific mind is magnificent. Man forgets that he was endowed with this great faculty by his Creator, and glories as though he had not received it. What must the Creator be who could form such a being? or who could make such an intricate creation containing all these wonders!

What would man have been, had he not fallen and been debased!

There is another sober reflection here, in that the men of science have taken the lead in seeking to discredit the Bible, and have overthrown the faith of many. Not that all scientific men are infidels or

atheists, as we have pointed out in this column on other occasions, but they as a class have been in the forefront of attackers of divine revelation. Is it any wonder if God in His ways of government should allow the same men to perfect ways and means of their own destruction, and that of their whole system of civilization? The mind of man set against his Creator shall surely reap just recompense. When God gave instruction regarding leprosy, so that the priest of Israel could detect it, He said of leprosy in the forehead, "The priest shall pronounce him UTTERLY unclean; his plague is in his head." Lev. 13:44. Is not this figuratively significant?

Scientists have also developed a deadly gas, one quart of which can kill every living thing within a cubic mile, and one drop on a man's hand would kill him within 30 seconds. Another invention is a crop-killing germ that can be spread from the air to destroy all the crops of a country, and so produce starvation. Do these things speak of the "Prince of Peace," or of "the destroyer"?

Now the problem is to save man from his own ingenuity. The imminence of another war would bring on paralyzing fear - "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Luke 21:26. There is coming "distress of nations, with perplexity" (Luke 21:25).

The world is engaged in the greatest armaments race of all times, and great armaments races have always preceded wars. But the Scriptures foretold of "wars and rumors of wars," and there is a man coming who will make the earth a wilderness and destroy the cities thereof. He will be "the beast" who will head up the revived Roman Empire - see Isa. 14 and Rev. 13 and 17. He is called the "king of Babylon" in Isaiah because he will be the last holder of that Gentile supremacy that began with Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

Scoffers are inclined to view the Bible as old-fashioned and outmoded, but it is thoroughly in keeping with what man has just now developed. These late awful explosions mentioned earlier release energy that produces heat to melt everything within a considerable radius; but long ago the Word of God spoke of a time that is coming, called the "day of the Lord," which "will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.... The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." 2 Pet. 3:10, 12.

Today there is a speculation on whether or not man can set off a chain reaction by an H-bomb explosion that will ignite the atmosphere and sea. This is most unlikely, but God who stored all these forces in the earth, and who lights the earth with the burning of the sun, can surely completely destroy all the works of men, and He has said that He will.

While the Bible is not a scientific textbook, it is never made obsolete by any discovery of science - it is always up-to-date. And in all ages and in all conditions it has faithfully exposed the evil heart of man, and been a voice to his conscience.

Christian reader, there is no reason for fear or alarm on our part. We know what is coming on the earth, for God has treated us as friends; that is, He has told us the secrets of what is coming (Gen. 18:17; Isa. 41:8; John 15:15), but we have a blessed hope - "We look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior" (Phil. 3:20; J.N.D. Trans.). Soon we shall hear that shout and be called up to meet Him in the air. The developments of these days point with unmistakable evidence to the close proximity of

the "great tribulation" and the "day of vengeance of our God," and if these are near, just so much nearer is the call of the heavenly Bridegroom, for it will precede the time of trouble that is coming on all the earth.

The anticipation of seeing Him should cause us to trim our lamps, so that in the last moments of our darkness our lamps may give a clear and true light. It was the awakening by the call at midnight, "Behold, the bridegroom," that caused all the virgins to trim their lamps (Matt. 25). The wicks of old lamps used to become covered with carbon, and dim the light; so the taint of the world will form a crust on us that will hinder our testimony. Such needs to be trimmed away.

Then the realization of the doom that is soon to overtake the unsuspecting worldlings, should cause us to warn them to flee from the wrath to come. The Apostle Paul said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11).

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?... Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless." 2 Pet. 3:11, 13, 14.

The Weapons of Our Warfare

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. 10:3-5.

We may see in the first epistle to the Corinthians how the Apostle employed those arms with God to the overthrowing of strongholds, whatever the reasoning or the high thing that was lifted up against the knowledge of God. Take their fleshly zeal for Paul, Apollos, or Cephas; he brings in Christ and His cross to judge its roots, declaring that the former were but ministering servants through whom they themselves believed and as the Lord gave to each; and in fact all theirs, and they Christ's, and Christ God's. It was a carnal corruption of their privileges. Take their worldly ease; with such an unbelieving anticipation of the day when we shall all reign together, he contrasts the apostles set by God as the last appointed to death, despised, suffering, and become as the world's offscouring until now. Take their appeal to law courts; he confronts the indignity of saints, who are to judge the world and angels, prosecuting suits one against another before the unjust. Take their laxity about temple feasts; he shows that their boasted intelligence about the vanity of idols was exposing them to Satan's snare, and drawing them into communion with demons. Take last their denial that the dead rise; he proves that it virtually upsets the resurrection of Christ, and consequently the gospel with all their heavenly privileges and hope. Thus admirably does the former epistle lead captive every thought into the obedience of Christ.

What Amazing Grace!

The Son of God came down from heaven in grace; He is gone up in righteousness; He is coming in glory.

The Father sent the Son; the Son gave Himself for us, and it was by the eternal Spirit that He offered Himself. Now God is for us, Christ in us, and the Spirit's seal upon us. We are children of God, members of the body of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost.

We have righteousness and we wait for its hope. We have the earnest, and wait for possession of the inheritance. We have redemption as to our souls, and wait for the redemption of our bodies.

We have the salvation of our souls, and look to the Savior to change our bodies of humiliation. We have received the Holy Spirit, and wait for the Bridegroom.

What amazing grace that could thus set us in such blessing!

Where Is Thy Talent?

"How much owest thou unto my lord?" (Luke 16:5).

Many talents are being hid "in the earth" today, and it is not alone the one-talented men and women who are doing so.

"Afraid" of being considered peculiar, and unwilling to be reproached for Christ's sake, countless numbers are letting the "earth" have their ability.

Living for the things of this world, which must end with time, is as surely hiding talents in the earth as literally burying them far beneath the surface of the ground would be.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15:58.

Which World?

If our lives are based on false premises, the more true we are to our ideals the more completely we shall be out of the will of God. It is of the utmost importance that we have a right perspective of life, and realize that its values do not lie in this world, but in the world to come. They do not lie in the reward and recognition of man, but in that which awaits us in the presence of Christ. To live for the wrong world is tragic, no matter how noble our lives may be otherwise.

He Who Knew All Covered All

The very God before whom all things are naked and open, who knows us thoroughly, and has taught us to see ourselves in measure as He sees us, is the One who has covered up our sin - yes, He has covered up all the sin which His omniscience knows to be in us, for He has not acted toward us on our estimate of sin, but on His own. None can condemn, since God Himself justifies. God has not put us in the place of justifying ourselves; He does that Himself. And He takes our part much more effectually than we could take our own. Hence there is no guile in the spirit. So to speak, it is not needed. All anxiety about making out a case for ourselves is removed, since God Himself declares His righteousness in covering our sins, and making us His righteousness. If we search ever so deeply (and it is well to do so) as to what sin is, God knows it more deeply, and has dealt with it in judgment on the cross of Christ according to His own estimate of it.

The Whole Armor of God

The few verses in the close of the epistle to the Ephesians (chap. 6:14-18) will give us the basis of the thoughts I desire to present to my readers. They are found at the end of the epistle which sets us already in the "heavenlies in Christ" (J.N.D. Trans.).

We read in chapter 1:7, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace," following the blessed calling of God in which He has set us before Him as sons, holy and without blame before Him in love, and accepted in the Beloved (vv. 3-6). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved."

We enter this wonderful sphere of blessing by redemption through blood, as Israel was delivered by the passover and Red Sea. Then Christ has been raised up as man and seated on high (vv. 19, 20); the people have been quickened, raised up together, and seated in Him in the heavenlies (chap. 2:1-6).

In chapter 3:10 we read, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Thus her testimony reaches the hosts on high, even at this present time. The angels see the Church in Christ Jesus; the world is to see His epistle in her here below!

When we come to chapter 6:12, we find our warfare is carried on in the same sphere. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood," as Joshua and Israel in an earthly Canaan, "but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [heavenly, margin] places."

Thus, whether for our blessings, our position, the Church's testimony, or our warfare, the scene is all in that sphere into which we have entered already "in Christ." And this is really what our Canaan is. We are passing on to be in the Father's house on high, where no conflict will ever be; but we are already in an order of blessing where we have to fight the Lord's battles against His enemies, and this is the true normal conflict of the Lord's Host.

It will readily be seen that this armor of God is more that which enables us to stand against the foe, as we read, "That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." It is not so much an aggressive warfare as a defensive. It relates too to the condition of the heart and conscience which, when good, leaves the foe without resource, and our souls are thus maintained consciously in the joy of our heavenly position as witnesses and soldiers of a glorified Christ. Do we suppose if our souls are bent on maintaining such a position, that Satan will allow us to pass? We shall never be so conscious of the depth of his wiles as then. Alas! what mournful instances

crowd upon our memory, of those who once ran well, who fought valiantly in the Lord's battles, and fell before the foe! Some part of his armor wanting; some joint let loose; some moment of an ungirded loin, and the ever watchful foe sent home his wile, and the bravest have fallen. Alas! what dishonor has been heaped upon His name; what shame and confusion of face have followed, when some active servant, some bright and blessed witness, prostrate before the foe, proves that none are secure in this solemn yet blessed battlefield, when lacking the condition of soul unfolded in this "whole armor of God."

O beloved friends, let us be warned, deeply, truly warned - yea, forewarned, and therefore forearmed. If Peter had believed the words of Jesus, he would have deeply mistrusted himself, and failure perhaps would never have ensued. How He watches our hearts all the way, warning us, reminding us of the dangers and snares, at times permitting us to go to the brink of some awful chasm where some allowed and unjudged sin was leading us. He allows us, as it were, to see the abyss for a moment, and makes our hearts shudder, and then turn to cling more closely to Him - to adore that unwearying, unwavering love which thus deals with these treacherous hearts, that we may not fall and dishonor Him. Blessed, adorable Lord and Savior! Who but Thyself would bear with us? Who would - who could keep us as Thou?

And oh, was there ever a day in which Thy keeping was so needed as this? Hardly a book we take up, hardly a thought which is current, but carries some devil's wile concealed. Lord, keep the young in this infidel day. Preserve the tender, impressible heart from the corruption of man, from the lie of Satan which circulates around. Give grace to parents to make their home a place where the young heart turns instinctively to find it truly "home" that they may not seek in the outer world what they should find there - the genial warmth of a parent's watchful heart, the confidence of his trusting child. Walk before your children, dear parents, and present Christ to them thus. Win their hearts to Jesus by preaching Him in your words and ways.

The first thing which is presented to us in this armor of God, is the inward condition of our souls. There can be no divine activity until the heart is right with God. We may be heavenly men and know the things which are freely given to us of God, without this heart of a Christian soldier - a heart to which the truth of God has been applied in such a way that all is broken which would hinder the vessel being used. Hence nearly all the thoughts we have in this armor are what we would term subjective truth. He casts us back upon our own condition, but He never does this until we have been fully established by His grace in Christ. When this is so, we can bear anything; we can bear to be broken to pieces in conscience and heart by His word, just because this experimental work never gives us a thought of uncertainty as to our soul's acceptance with Him. It is just because we are fully accepted in Christ that this dealing comes; we would not have such dealing with our hearts if it were not so. Many bitter experiences come before peace with God and redemption are known. Then comes another order of dealings, because of this new and blessed relationship and place before Him.

We read, "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." Now there is no truth in the world but the Word of God. You find doubts. and darkness, and ignorance, and pride - plenty of speculations of man's mind which, because he is a creature, never can rise superior to the level of a creature's mind. The Word of God, being the revelation of the truth, sets everything in its right place and relationship with Him. It tells me what God is as revealed in Christ; it tells me what He is

to a poor, lost, ruined world. It tells me what man is, what Satan is, what sin is; what His righteousness is regarding sin; what His love to the sinner. All is unfolded in the Word of God. But man cannot bear to be thus judged morally, and set where it sets him; hence every effort is made to weaken its force, to destroy the poor man's faith in the living Word of God. Nevertheless, one who has tasted it in any little measure, finds in it (as the deep, cooling draft of water to the soul of a thirsty wanderer) that which satisfies his heart and sets his burdened conscience at rest. In it he finds and learns his Savior by the power and teaching of the Spirit of God.

When this living Word is applied to the heart and conscience, and the whole inner man curbed and broken, his loins are thus girded with the truth. The loins are that portion of the body that need to be braced up and supported in conflict and toil. Wherever we find Scripture speak of girded loins, we are supposed to be in the place of conflict and weariness, or of exercises of heart. As the Lord said to Job, "Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou Me." Job 38:3.

When the loins are braced up with the truth, the affections are curbed and the will broken, so that there is a firmness of tone imparted to the whole man. He finds his way strewn with those things after which his natural heart would go out; but "the truth" has judged their value in God's sight, as well as in his, and they are refused.

In this battlefield, where defeat is ruinous and where retreat is impossible, how deeply important that not even for one instant the girdle should be relaxed. A moment of carnal ease or fancied security, and the heart is entrapped into some action which years of bitter tears cannot recall. How we find too that even if the will was not active in going after the desires of the flesh and of the mind, the loins were ungirded and failure ensued. See David when he should have been with girded loins as a man of war in that day, in the battlefield at the time when kings go forth to battle; the heart was thus an easy prey to a watchful foe. Oh, what a bitter fall ensued in the matter of the wife of Uriah! Years of sorrow followed, and consequences which no repentance could ever efface from his house, marked the sure and certain righteous government of God.

Look at Peter in the garden of Gethsemane. No sense of his own total want of strength in the face of Satan. No thought of Satan's power. He was sleeping with ungirded loins when he should have watched and prayed; he was in conflict when his Lord and Master was submitting Himself as a lamb for the slaughter. How had He (blessed Lord!) spent His time? In an agony of prayer. He was praying when Peter was sleeping; He was submitting when Peter was fighting. But what a sad conflict it was - flesh fighting with flesh, and with the carnal weapons of men! Then following Christ "afar off" - then denying with oaths - then the bitter tears!

How we see too that in this heavenly warfare a moment of victory is a solemn and dangerous one for the soul. We are never so near defeat as when we have conquered. The very success of the spiritual man takes him away from the sense of full and complete dependence. It is an intoxicating moment, so to speak, when the heart feels and knows that God has been using one in the battlefield. We are inclined to look upon it as our success; self is once more aroused, and the enemy has that on which he can work. David had conquered, and David was just crowned in Hebron. His first thought was of the ark, but his success did not serve to keep him a dependent man. He consults his "captains," and places the ark of God on a "new cart" instead of on the "shoulders" of the Levites. How the failure of a spiritual man involves others in its sorrow; the

"breach upon Uzzah" told this sad tale. Tells too how the moment of success is the moment to distrust oneself more deeply than ever, a moment to brace up the loins more firmly with the truth.

The time will come when we may let the heart go free, when conscience will not be needed, and there shall be girded loins no more forever. In heaven we shall be able to let the heart go free. Here never! If you tire for a moment in watchfulness, and relax the loins, the heart wanders into something that is not Christ. Then comes the reaction, and we tire of self more than ever. It has sprung up again and defiled the heart.

It will not do to have the truth merely known, but it must be the truth applied; and then with girded loin and broken will the heart goes on with God, and Satan's wiles avail not. God's truth has revealed all that is in heaven, and has revealed God's heart on earth. It has judged all in this evil world; every motive and spring of action is laid bare by Him who was and is the living Word of God.

He came into this world - the Truth Himself - that He might bear witness to the truth. Not one single motive ever governed ours that governs His. The eternal Son of God became a man; He walked with God for three and thirty years, never doing His own will, perfect as it ever was. "Not My will but Thine be done." He met Satan at the beginning of His path of service. The enemy came up to seduce Him from the path of obedience. He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Own me, said the enemy, and all shall be Thine. As God, He could have put aside his power in a moment. But this would not do for us. As man in obedience, and by obedience He bound the strong man. As man in obedience He was hungry. To work a miracle would be an easy task for Him who created the world. But no! He came to obey; and while it was no harm to be hungry, it was harm to satisfy that hunger without a word from God. "Man," He says, "shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." I have come to obey. The living Word, in obedience on earth; perfect Man before God; perfect God to man. He was the truth, and the truth is now embodied in the words (not merely word) of God. Scripture is the words of God - the intelligible words disclosing all His mind. "Which things also we speak," says the Apostle, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

The Whole Armor of God

Having shown us the preparation of our hearts to meet the foe by this subjective truth - a girded loin - he passes on to the state of the conscience, marked by the next part of the armor, the "breastplate of righteousness." As it is a question here not of our standing before God, but of our facing the foe, I need but state that this breastplate of righteousness is a conscience void of offense before God and men.

There is no part of the armor which if lacking will make the heart so weak as this breastplate. Let none but one's own conscience know in secret the stain that is there - be it of the faintest hue - the heart cannot stand boldly before Satan's accusing power! The (consciously) righteous is as bold as a lion. Nothing is more to be sought than this most precious of all precious conditions of soul, a good conscience before God and the enemy. "Herein," says Paul, "do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." Acts 24:16.

In the ordinary Christian, who is but seldom active in this heavenly sphere, a good conscience or the reverse plays a part more in a grieved or hindered Spirit than in open failure and feebleness. His own heart can tell whether his joy is full in deep, precious communion with the Father and the

Son. This can only be enjoyed with a good conscience, an uncondemning heart. Confidence in God is perfect when the heart condemns us not.

If one labors actively in the forefront of the battle, how truly terrible is the case when in the midst of outward activity the accusations of the enemy fall on the ear of the heart. To keep up the outward activity in such a state of soul, is to leave the soul open to the wiles, and indeed the open power, of the enemy in a most solemn manner. How often those who have boldly stood for Christ and in His hand have been most blessed instruments of His power, have fallen - irrecoverably fallen from their post - because thus open to the snares of the devil.

There never has been, I think, a breakdown of this kind, but it has been preceded by warnings and previous dealings of grace, but which fell unheeded on the ear and heart. The Lord give us to be warned and to shun the danger - the wrong turning in our path - the wrong hour - to look not on the wine when it is red!

Having on the breastplate of righteousness then keeps the heart as bold and free as air, but free to go on with God. There rests no frown on His face, so to speak, and the soul is conscious of the freedom which grace has given, in His presence. The conscience purged by the precious blood of Jesus, maintained in practice good before Him, knows the joy of going on with Him freely and naturally. In such a walk the flesh is better known than in one who learns it by a bad conscience through failure and weakness. It learns the tendencies of the flesh in the light of His presence; it knows it has His strength to count upon; he makes indwelling sin, though not a ground of communion, an occasion of it, and his heart judges the tendencies it finds there, without the failure, learning them by the standard of God Himself as known, rather than the lower standard of the conscience which feels the stain. The first part of the armor then expresses the normal condition of the soul to which the truth has been applied, thus judging all the motives within, and bracing up the whole man. It may act detectively as the Word of God in Heb. 4:12, discerning "the thoughts and intents of the heart," appraising every thought which springs up, as to its source - as of God, or of the flesh. Or discerning whether the intent which the heart cherishes has Christ for its object, or self. It may come too in the shape of a formative and sanctifying truth, as we read in John, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." That in Hebrews is more the detective power of the Word, while John refers more to the formation of the soul, separating it by the word of the Father from the world. All that is of the world is not of Him. And then by the revelation of a Man in glory before the Father, who is our life, and who is the pattern for the new man before Him.

The second part of the armor is more directly as regards the conscience, giving condition of soul to face the foe, no armor being provided for the back. The breastplate bright - the conscience good - the soul thus walking with God, and the enemy having nothing to point at, nothing to enfeeble the boldness which it needs, and which otherwise would make the soldier of Christ as weak as water in His presence. No self-accusations to render him irritable with others, and in this way his heart is kept in peace. It is surprising to see how happy things seem, what a different hue they present when the soul is walking peacefully with God. The reverse too when there is an accusing conscience. Where it is so, we are ready to find fault with others, and see what we would not see if we were happy in the love of Christ,

flowing from a peaceful walk and a conscience void of offense toward God and man.

When the conscience is good and the heart free to go on happily with the Lord, it is wonderful what a peaceful character it imparts to the pathway of the soldier of Christ. He is not what the world would call a hero. God's hero presents a sorry figure to the world's eye. A humble, broken spirit characterizes him. He has found the secret of strength, and the ability to govern his own spirit in a world where a man of spirit is esteemed. "He that ruleth his spirit [is better) than he that taketh a city" (Pro. 16:32).

What a tone this peacefulness of spirit gives to the whole man in the trials and troubles of the way. "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Pet. 3:4). In man's sight but little esteemed, but not so in the sight of God. We never find that peaceful spirit when the soul is not happy with God. It may be put on outwardly and there be a canker in the heart, but it is one of those precious graces of Christian life, which there is no such thing as imitating.

Alas! one sees the want of this, and cannot but see it in many who are occupied with very high truths. Objective things are presented to the soul and esteemed, as surely they ought to be. But there is the other side too - the broken, humble spirit which esteems others better than itself - the tone of soul which is ever on the watch for some line of Christ in the ways of others. This is the "mind of others." No doubt that the divine energy which lifts one out of things here below is much to be sought for and desired; but when this side alone is looked for, the tendency is to make the person hard and inclined to judge others. To me, it is far more wonderful to see Him walking on earth as a lowly man, acting divinely in every circumstance, never indifferent to any sorrow or trial while feeling it more keenly than others, yet always accepting the trial in the meekness and gentleness which bows its head and accepts all the sorrow as of God. I do not say we can enjoy this beauty of Christ, or indeed perceive it at all, if we only seek to know Him thus. We must know our place first "in Christ" before God; we must "know Him" in measure, in that scene as the glorified One. Then we will be morally fit to enjoy Him, and trace His wondrous path of lowly love - the more to be wondered-at as we know the Person of Him who was there.

This lovely peacefulness of soul carries one into all the details of each and every day, with soft and gentle tread, sheds by its presence a calm and placid influence on others. It gives firmness to the pathway in which it treads the battlefield of God. The feet thus sandaled with firm footing, as it may be said of the glad tidings of peace, carries peace into the enemy's land; and in face of the restless anxiety and uneasy fears which govern the hearts of so many, and as much as lieth in it, it lives peaceably with all.

Jesus Himself was the Prince of Peace. He passed through a world of unrest, in the calm of heaven. He was ever in the bosom of His Father. No circumstances ever ruffled Him. Sorrow and rejection pressed upon Him; unbelief and hardness of heart met His Spirit to chill, if it were possible, the love of His heart; still He went on. He sighed at man's unbelieving spirit, but lifted up His eyes to heaven. The Samaritans would not have Him in His mission of love, because His

face was as it were to go to Jerusalem; that is, His heart was bent upon a path which ended in the cross and shame. He bowed in submission and passed onward to another village, rebuking James and John who knew not what spirit they were of. His yieldingness is known to all (Luke 9:51-56).

At His end, when all His sorrow stood before His soul, even when He had surveyed its mighty depths and accepted the cup from His Father's hand, He passed through shame and scorn and spitting in calmness and peace. No moving of His heart to haste; no reviling when reviled; no threatening when He suffered; His case was with His Father. In the midst of all, with girded loin as Servant of servants, He thought of Peter's fleshly blow which cut off Malchus' ear; He touched and healed it, repairing His poor impulsive Peter's rashness. He still had His eye on Peter. He thought of him as one who specially needed His care. His eye was turned on him at the moment the cock crew, to disclose to him the distance his heart had wandered from his Lord. Silent before His foe, He committed Himself to Him that judges righteously, when His judges were condemning (and they knew it) an innocent man. He was as "a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs."

Oh, how His blessedness judges our ways! What trifles move our hearts to haste! But still our calling is to be the heralds of peace, and of the Prince of Peace - to carry into a world of unrest a spirit of peace and restfulness which is to be found only where self is broken and God is trusted.

This condition of soul results as the outflow of Christian character, consequent on the previous pieces of this armor of God. The inward condition formed and braced by the Word of God - the conscience perfect to face the foe. No thought for self is needed, and the heart is thus free to go on with God and think of others, and, with restfulness of spirit, shedding blessing upon those around. Thus we find that this relative state toward others only ensues when the personal, inward condition is right with God. "Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," follows the girded loin and breastplate of righteousness.

The Whole Armor of God

We have examined the subjective or inward state of soul, personally and relatively, in the previous parts of this armor of God. Now we come to that inward state which rests in unfeigned faith upon God Himself in His known character - what He is - which sustains in us perfect confidence in Him so that come what will, we know that nothing can separate us from His love. Things may seem adverse; we may have reached our wits' end, so to speak; still the heart that knows Him who cannot be but what He is, waits patiently for His time to show Himself strong in behalf of them that trust Him.

"Above all [this previous condition of soul], taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked [one]." What is here spoken of is not the faith of the sinner which first lays hold on Christ. We find that in the epistle to the Romans, and we may term it the no-working faith of a sinner: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Chap. 4:5. Here in Ephesians we find the faith of a saint - the perfection of confidence in God known experimentally as One who is what He says He is. That confidence which as the heart grows in the deeper knowledge of Him, discovers more deeply the springs of evil within, yet finds its confidence in Him growing in proportion, so that the heart trusts and counts upon Him against itself. It can say, I cannot trust myself, and God cannot trust me, but I can count on Him and trust Him. It can say, Go with me, for I am stiffnecked and cannot but fail if left alone.

You find this "shield of faith" practically illustrated in Moses. God had said that the people were a stiffnecked people, and if He were to come into their midst He must consume them in a moment. Then Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, and the Lord came down and spake with Moses face to face as a man speaks with his friend. Moses had found grace in the sight of the Lord, and his heart sought to find grace; he sought to learn the fullness of this grace. All the goodness of the Lord then passed before him; and his heart, bowed in the presence of the mercy of the Lord, made the very fact of their being a stiffnecked people the plea that His presence might go with them by the way. The very reason which the Lord gave in Exod. 33:5 for not coming into their midst lest He should consume them in a moment, Moses pleads in Exod. 34:9 as the reason why He should go with them. "And he said, If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray Thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance." But he had found out meanwhile what God is in Himself, and in this consciousness he pleads for His presence on the ground of what He is, and seeks His company by the way, because they were a stiffnecked people! Oh, what confidence; what a plea to present to Him in the consciousness of the depths of such evil hearts! And it must be so, the more He is known, and the more we know ourselves.

See this confidence even before forgiveness is known, in the woman of the city who was a sinner (John 4:28, 29). The very light which rendered her speechless as a convicted sinner in His presence, drew her heart to the One who, while

He searched the conscience, piercing and following in its turnings all the depths of sin and a nature at enmity with God, drew the heart to Him in love, so that she could count on Him, because of what He was, against all that His holiness had disclosed of her heart. In her case it was a sinner's confidence who had not yet been assured of His grace. How much greater must our confidence be in One whose grace is known, and who has set us without a spot in the presence of His holiness where the very light and holiness only increases the confidence of our hearts the more.

Satan may come in with his dark suggestions, but their power is gone because God is known. Thank God, we do know Him better than we know ourselves - not better than He knows us, but better than we know our own hearts. What a comfort to the heart, that He knew all - that He knows all! I can go to Him and tell Him all - the depths of evil, and the springs and motives which I find there, and find that I have Him for me against it all. Satan's fiery darts (I do not now wish to enter upon their full meaning as used of God for discipline of the soul under His hand) are quenched with the joyous and exulting note, God is for me! Silenced by this blessed condition of soul conveyed to us figuratively in this "shield of faith."

How much better it is to possess this blessed state of soul by having on the armor at all times, than to find its importance when wounded by some shaft of Satan. It is not the day of conflict which is the time to put it on, but when the heart is with God in the consciousness of His favor resting upon it. At the same time the deep consciousness that a watchful enemy is ever ready to take advantage of an unguarded moment, should such be allowed, and work defeat or wound the soldier of Christ.

Its deep importance is learned at times by failures and woundings of the soul. How much better, I repeat, it is to learn it in confiding peace with God - to use it in companionship with Him, rather

than by exposing oneself with some portion of it wanting, to the assaults of Satan's power. Negatively we may learn its importance by slothfulness of soul with God; the heart thus becomes indifferent and cold. Positively we may learn it when the conscience is concerned and not at rest. Then the Spirit of God acts as the stern, unbending convicter of the conscience, making us feel the loss of that joy and happy communion with our God and Father, as known and enjoyed against the evil, by His pointing out the evil which has thus separated practically the soul from God. How frequently we find the former, or negative, side. The latter, or positive side, is more terrible to bear, because the soul has enjoyed the favor of God which is better than life, and has lost it through allowed evil. I speak, of course, of one whose acceptance as a sinner is complete, and who has known it in the soul's consciousness.

Thus this complete, perfect confidence in God, expressed in the shield of faith, follows all the previous inward condition of the soul conveyed to us in the loins girded with the truth - the breastplate of righteousness, and the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

The Whole Armor of God

If the shield of faith conveys to us the soul's perfect confidence in what God is in His own unchangeable nature, the helmet of salvation teaches us what God has done for us, known and enjoyed in the soul, and with that unquestioning certainty that never leaves in the heart a shadow of doubt as to the result by-and-by. When the soul feels and knows this, it is free in the day of battle, and goes on without fear. It can think of others when the enemy seeks their ruin. It feels that that lovely word, "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle," imparts a firmness and joyfulness than no present circumstances can ever mar. The enemy may rage, and evil may be there; but through that impregnable helmet no sword can ever pass. God's salvation as a helmet on the head, set there by the hands of God Himself, renders the heart fearless in the face of the foe. One is free, in the forgetfulness of all personal questions as to one's own things, to desire others' good.

What a lovely illustration we have of this helmet of salvation in Paul in Acts 26. For a considerable time in prison, cut off from the work he loved and lived in, and the sad thought perhaps that his own conduct was the immediate cause of his imprisonment, the first moment of his conversion fills his soul. There stood that blessed man bound with chains, before Festus, with King Agrippa and Bernice. He unfolded to them the story of his former life, his conversion, his mission of service. This Pharisee of the Pharisees, this righteous man according to the law who had lived in all good conscience before God, while doing many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth - this dread persecutor of the saints - of the Church of God - there he stood, the attention of the Roman governor riveted by the glowing words addressed to the king, until Festus cried out, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad."

Mark the calm and collected reply: "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king [Agrippa] knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

There stood this blessed witness of the power of that salvation with which God had covered his head for the day of battle. An evident consciousness too of the truth they conveyed, in the king's soul, before whom he spake the glowing words, eloquent from the calm and holy joy which filled the speaker's heart. How near was King Agrippa to this salvation, and yet how far off when, to cover and conceal his emotion, he rose up and went aside to confer with the rest.

Chains and imprisonments had not dampened this heavenly joy. Free in heart, and with the helmet of salvation on his brow, he can think of others' blessing. No desire was expressed as to removal of the bonds of Christ which he wore.

His desires were for others. He did not merely wish they were Christians, which King Agrippa seemed almost persuaded to become, but that they might be "both almost, and altogether such as I am," that they might have the same deep joy which filled his heart - the same salvation consciously which rested on his brow - "except

these bonds" - he could bear them alone for the

Master whom he loved, and he would only wish them to be as happy as he, without the bonds.

Oh, what a softened feeling grace imparts to the heart which brings us in contact with a living Person who has placed the helmet of salvation on our brow! It is not the salvation itself which then engrosses, but the One who has so acted for us, setting our heart as free as air, that it may run in the same channel with His heart toward an evil world.

The soul is now free and in order to wield "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Remark that first of all, the Word of God has formed us and braced up the whole inner man; the conscience is good; the path is peaceful; confidence in God is perfect, and the conscious joy of a salvation which no adverse power can mar, and which links the heart with Him who has accomplished it and bestowed it upon us, is making the heart joyously free. Then comes the aggressive warfare by the sword of the Spirit against the enemy of soul.

Remark too that as in all this armor it is a question of meeting the wiles of the devil, so here it is not the word used in edification for souls, but for detecting and unmasking these very wiles. How prostrate and feeble the soldiers of Christ seem to be in these infidel days. They fear often to stand alone by that Word which God has set above all His name (Psalm 138:2). They are not formed by its precepts themselves, and therefore they are not fit to use this mighty sword; it would cut themselves, for it has two edges. It must do its own keen circumcising work with ourselves before it can be used effectively against the foe. Israel must be circumcised themselves before they can draw their sword and follow the leading of the Captain of the Host of the Lord.

But when the soul is thus fitted to wield this sword, no enemy can withstand it. See the Lord Jesus Himself in conflict with the devil (Matt. 4). No power was put forth by Him to destroy the destroyer. No word was spoken to correct the misquotation of the enemy (v. 6). "It is written" was His weapon; and "By the word of Thy lips I have kept Me from the paths of the destroyer" (Psalm 17:4). It is very striking, as one has noticed, that when it became a direct conflict between Jesus and the devil, the Word of God was the instrument used on both sides. The Lord used it to explain and govern His own conduct, and the devil used it against Him. How solemn! In the present day, when the saints are thrown upon it as their resource, the devil uses it for his own ends as well. But

the saints must be formed in obedience by it, else they will find they must fall with the sword of the Spirit in their hands, because it will wound themselves.

When those wiles of the devil are presented to the soul, there is no fear felt for the result of the conflict by the well-trained soldier of Christ. He is not amazed at what the enemy presents, nor distracted by an effort to have some text ready to meet the foe; the Word of God comes readily to the heart and lips, the wile is answered, the soul is steadied, and its conduct and obedience are accounted for by the Word. No wile of the enemy can stand for a moment before that mighty weapon which is "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. 10:4, 5. Every infidel suggestion is met; every perversion of the truth is laid bare - every superstition with which the devil deceives his votaries, exulting in their shame - is exposed. All is met by the mighty instrument which alone can guide the soul in a world of boasting progress, but which, having lost the knowledge of God and refused the revelation of Himself in tender grace in Jesus, ripens under the culture of the wicked one, for that judgment which will consign himself and his followers to the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, to be tormented day and night forever! See Rev. 20:10-15.

The Whole Armor of God

Eph. 6:18

We now come to the last mighty weapon in this "whole armor of God," the breathing of His people's hearts to God by prayer, when they have been formed by His Word - His breath to us! It is the characteristic feature of Christian life; obedience and dependence mark its activities in this fallen world. It is very striking how frequently we find the Word of God and prayer in close connection in Scripture. When God was dealing with and testing man in the flesh in the nation of Israel, He did not name prayer as part of their relationships with Him. They accepted, in their own strength, the law as the terms of their relationship. Now, prayer expresses the weakness of man. There were two forms of address given them, one expressing blood guiltiness (Deut. 21), and the other the expression of worship in the perfection of obedience (Deut. 26). But man was put on his own strength to do

these things and so to live in them. What ruin

ensued! Yet, in the midst of such a wreck, no doubt many a faithful heart cried to God, outside all ordered and formal relationships with Him.

In the opening of the first book of Samuel, we find a Hannah - desolate and pining after her heart's desire, moving her lips as her heart expressed its cry to the Lord. Even Eli the high priest rebuked her, supposing that she was drunken with wine. But her answer seems to have touched a chord in the old priest's soul, as she replied, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD." Eli answered her, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel [He who had wrestled of old with Jacob in another way] grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him." 1 Sam. 1:9, etc. The child Samuel, whose name signifies "asked of God," was the answer to this cry.

We find too in the early chapters of this book how complete was the wreck of things in Israel. The priesthood was defiled and corrupted, and at last the ark of God passed into the hands of the Philistines; and "Ichabod" was written on the ruined people whose aged high priest broke his neck in falling backward from his seat by the side of the gate, when he heard that the ark had been taken by the uncircumcised.

All ordered relationships were now gone. The people had no priest to draw nigh to Jehovah; the priest (if he desired it) had no ark, where to consult by "Urim and Thummim" - no mercy seat on which to sprinkle the blood before the Lord. What will now be His resource, who is never frustrated by the evil and failure of man? Samuel, the man who was asked of God, will now be the "prophet of the Lord" by whom God will reveal Himself again by the "word of the Lord" to the consciences of those who had an ear to hear. If God thus maintained His relationship through the consciences of His people by Samuel, the cry of need, the prayer of His people also went up to Him by Samuel (chaps. 1:8, 9; 12:18, 19, 23). In this we find the two great principles or characteristics of spiritual life, so frequently found together in Scripture; namely, the Word of God and prayer. Mary at the feet of Jesus, hearing His voice, and the disciples saying to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 10 and 11), illustrate this thought. See also Peter in Acts 6: "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly"; then, "Continuing instant in prayer" (Col. 3:16; 4:2). Even the very food we eat is sanctified to us by the Word of God and prayer. God's Word sanctions certain things for the use of the body, as meat and drink for His people; they receive it from Him with prayer, refusing nothing that has thus been set apart by His Word; "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." 1 Tim. 4:4, 5.

Prayer is the first expression of the newly born soul to God. They led Saul of Tarsus, blinded by the light of the glory in the face of Jesus Christ, to Damascus; and in the "house of Judas," in the street called "Straight," behold this persecutor on his knees. A little time before he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord Jesus; now the earnest cry ascends to and enters His ear; and "Behold he prayeth," shows how the Lord's ear and heart were attentive to these strong cryings of this chief of sinners.

Prayer takes very varied characteristics in the Word of God. If we turn to the 11th chapter of Luke we find the Lord instructing the hearts of His disciples in the earnest prayer of importunity. He says, "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." How practical is the scene He here portrays! The deep sense of need, and dependence on One who has discovered Himself to our souls as One who alone can supply the need we feel. The sense of confidence is displayed too in the earnestness which turns not aside from Him to any other source. He knows the heart, and knows well whether there is this unmingled confidingness in Him. Yet it is not His goodness and readiness to hear and answer which are here unfolded, but the importunity, the pertinacity of the heart that clings to and cries to God until the need is supplied - that which abates not in earnestness in asking Him who has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you."

But this is not the highest character of prayer by any means; still it is needed for His people while they are here. A still more blessed provision - for making known our requests - is

found in Phil. 4:6. In this place we do not find that He promises to supply the need we express to Him, but He answers in another and much more blessed way. Ten thousand cares may press upon the heart; what is to be our resource? "Be careful for nothing!" is the reply. "Nothing," you answer; how can this be? Then He proceeds, "But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." And how blessed is the answer. Perhaps not one request has been granted, but the answer comes in another manner. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"! God puts His peace into the heart which has put its cares on God! How frequently we are disposed to allow our cares to eat away at the heart, and bow down the soul. Care for the Church, the saints of God; the deep anxieties of service for the Lord; for the conversion of those we love; for the recovery of those who have wandered from the way. Circumstances too may try the heart; the love of those whose love we valued has grown cold; the bitterness of being misunderstood and misjudged - all press upon the soul. How blessed those strong, bright words, "Be careful for nothing"! How blessed to go to God in the strong cryings and secret bitter tears which His eye has marked and noted, and hand over the cares to Him! Mark, it is not to our Father, but to God. It is not here the confidingness of relationship, but to a holy Being whose nature is known - whose throne is never touched by cares. The heart learns there to pour out its earnest cry, deepening in intensity from "prayer" to "supplication," until the heart has risen, as it were, above the cloud, above the cares which pressed upon the soul, until it bursts out in the pure light of heaven, in "thanksgiving" into the ever opened ear of One who gives His peace to the relieved heart, with the sweet sense that His hand is under the care, has taken it into His own merciful hands, and we have in exchange God's own peace.

But in Ephesians we are outside the things which distress the heart, in another way. The range of vision takes in the things which occupy the mind of Christ. The great interests of the Lord on earth are before us, more than our own cares. Not that He does not interest Himself with our little cares and trials - that He does; but here the prayer and supplication in the Spirit, with its watching and perseverance, is for "all saints." In the true dependence of one who is fully armed with this armor of God, prayer keeps the heart in confidingness in Him. Self is broken, and He is trusted; and the more knowledge the more prayer. Satan cannot seduce the heart which is ever in this attitude before God. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

The Lord's people have thus been prepared to meet the foe and to "withstand in the evil day"; that is, the whole period through which we now pass. The soul is formed by the truth; the conscience good, maintained in the light; the heart peaceful, in the confidingness and piety which walks with God and trusts Him amid the storms and waves which beat around us. Thus Satan's fiery darts are of no avail, and with the helmet of a known salvation covering the head, and the Word of God as the Spirit's sword, we are ready to meet the wiles of the devil, and the heart is kept in a right condition before God in this evil world. He has His true place of authority which orders all; the saint too is found in his true attitude of dependence and confidence before Him, as expressed in prayer, but prayer which embraces His great interests here on earth - "all saints" in their labors and conflicts, toils and joys.

(Concluded)

A difficulty may be a real one, but it is only for the unbelief of hearts that it is an obstacle, if on the path of God's will; for faith reckons upon God, and performs that which He wills, and difficulties are as nothing before Him. Unbelief can always find excuses, and excuses too that are apparently well founded; they have only this capital defect, that they leave God out.

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