

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 31

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 31, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

101 Chapters

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Christian Truth Volume 31

1 John 3:14

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

Love is of God; there one comes to the fountain of all the love that supplies the trickling stream of love down here. But what we want is to have our hearts opened to the fountain for more love. It is a very trickling stream now, though very blessed to find ever so little. If God is love, and He fills His Christ with all this love, do not you and I want it to flow as rivers of refreshment through our souls? Oh, that we might taste more and more what that is! Does God's love dwell in us? Yes, because God says so; but the waters are choked up. Is there that eternal fullness flowing into the soul, the fullness of that matchless love that picked up the vilest sinners as channels for it to flow in? - love that settles the competency of people by the Holy Spirit in them, to understand what this love is that flows out from God and through Christ to them? Can you say individually that that love flowing from God is filling your soul to all fullness, and is as a river flowing from you?

Meditation on 1 Timothy 3:16

There are several mysteries spoken of in the Word of God, but the one spoken of here is that which will never, in time or eternity, be fully fathomed by created beings - the mystery of godliness or piety. God has been pleased to show the depth of His love in the gift of His own Son (John 3:16). The Father has been fully revealed in and by His Son. "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 1:18. "No man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." Luke 10:22. The Lord Jesus could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." John 14:9. The Father, in all His grace and love, was fully manifested by Jesus here on earth, and especially at the cross where God made His own Son a sacrifice for all who avail themselves of the cleansing virtue of His shed blood. Truly, God has been manifested in His Son, but to know the Son is to know the Infinite, and our poor finite minds are not great enough to comprehend Him who will for all eternity be the object of the worship and praise of His redeemed.

"God was manifest in the flesh." When Moses was with God on Mount Sinai, he was told, "There shall no man see Me, and live." Exod. 33:20. But on that momentous night at Bethlehem, the shepherds were told by an angelic messenger that "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11. There for the first time in history of this world God became visible to the eye of man. And what a sight for poor mortal man to behold! There He lay, in the weakness of a babe, in the manger - He who is to have the government of the world upon His shoulder - the One who is "The mighty God" (Isa. 9:6). He, who being in the form of God, had now taken upon Himself the form of a servant, made in the likeness of men. When his mother and Joseph brought Him to the temple to do for Him after the custom of the law, Simeon could recognize that here was the One of whom Isaiah spoke - here was God's Salvation, in the flesh - "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of... Israel." Anna, a prophetess, spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Israel. In later years, the people of His nation said, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" Mark 6:3. But Peter, by the Spirit, said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matt. 16:16.

He was "justified in the Spirit." At His birth God could witness of His Son, "Good pleasure in men" (Luke 2:14; J.N.D. Trans.). For the first time since Adam was unfallen, God looked down from heaven and saw One in whom He could take pleasure. Jesus, about to enter upon His ministry, came to John the Baptist to be baptized of him, and to take His place among the publicans and the multitude who were confessing their sins. God, in justice to His own Son opened heaven, and His voice was heard, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:17. The Spirit of God descended like a dove and lighted upon Him. God was well pleased in what His Son had done, and He could not allow man to believe that this One was a sinner like those others. Later, the King, having been rejected by an unbelieving nation, was manifested on the holy mount in all His glory, and, "there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And Peter says, "This voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." (2 Pet. 1:17, 18.) Was He not justified in the Spirit when He

said, "Father, glorify Thy name"? A voice came to Him from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." John 12:28.

The angels were present at the creation when the morning stars sang together. They were present at Mount Sinai when the holy law of God was given, for it was given by the ministration of angels. God chose to send angels round about Elisha when he was threatened by the enemy. An angel, spoken of by name to Daniel, was the one by whom God chose to communicate with that great prophet. These were God's servants, created to do His bidding. But in all those ages they had never seen their Creator. Now on that most notable night, in the manger at Bethlehem, they viewed their King for the first time. There lay the Object of their worship and adoration, a Babe, helpless and an outcast from His birth, to be hunted so soon for His very life. No wonder that they proclaimed through the skies, "Glory to God in the highest."

As a man, when He had fasted for forty days in the wilderness, and had withstood all the temptations of Satan, the angels came and ministered to Him. An angel also appeared unto Him from heaven when He, contemplating the bearing of the sins of His people, cried out in the agony of His soul, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done." Luke 22:42. What a sight this must have been to the angels, to see Him whose word brought worlds into existence, thus prostrated in the Garden of Gethsemane. And they were to behold more. Poor, weak, puny men who were dependent on Jesus for their very breath of life, took Him and nailed Him to the cross, using Him most shamefully; and when they could think of nothing more to do to give vent to their hatred of Him, they sat down to watch His sufferings.

An angel was present on that glorious morning when Mary Magdalene, weeping at the tomb, turned herself and saw Him standing. Angels could say to the disciples at Bethany, "Ye men of Galilee... this same Jesus -" (Acts 1:11). What must have been the thoughts of those angelic hosts who had witnessed the incarnation and path of ministry of Him who had heretofore been invisible, but who had now manifested Himself in all meekness and humility to be the Savior by whom sinful men should obtain salvation from eternal judgment.

When the Lord Jesus went into the coast of Tiro and Sidon, on being accosted by a Gentile woman, He said truthfully, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," but nevertheless, on more than one occasion we have the record that His grace overstepped all bounds to reach out to meet the needs of those "having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). And His words are recorded, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." But it was not until Peter entered the house of Cornelius that the Gentiles as a class had the Word of God spoken to them. God proclaimed His approval of the reception of His Word by the Gentiles by the giving and sealing of His Holy Spirit. At the same time, God was preparing in His school a chosen vessel to carry the Word to the Gentiles - Saul of Tarsus, later to be known as the beloved Apostle Paul. How wonderful the plan of God to prepare the way and the servants too to bring the light of the gospel to the Gentiles as He had promised. How fruitful has that work been! Think of the countless myriads of Gentiles who have had the gospel preached to them.

That many of those who have heard the gospel now find the Lord Jesus precious to their souls is evidence that He is "believed on in the world." The world, as such, goes on its way, willfully ignoring Him whose claims are going to be heeded one day soon, but there are those who now, and also those who from the beginning, have believed to the saving of their precious souls. Oh!

that all who hear the Word might receive it by faith in their hearts. It is sad to think that there will be some who refuse to believe God's Word concerning Jesus. Because they refuse to believe the truth, God will "send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth." 2 Thess. 2:11, 12. Oh, to think that those who reject God's Son as their Savior will go down to perdition, to be forever in the place of torment prepared for the devil and his angels.

If man refuses to honor the name of Jesus, yet God in righteousness to His Son must and will vindicate His name. Until that time comes, Jesus is waiting patiently at the right hand of God in the glory. God had proclaimed in the Psalms, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." How blessed to know that the Object of our worship is now in the glory. The world cast Him out with these words: "We will not have this man to reign over us." Then they sent a messenger after Him in the person of that faithful martyr, Stephen, to repeat and reaffirm the message. But though earth would not have Him, heaven has received Him till the times of restitution of all things (Acts 3:21).

May God enable us who believe, to keep our eyes on Him in the glory, that we might be filled with His glory, so that we too by reflection may shine with that same glory light.

2 Corinthians 5:16

Jesus said, "I lay down My life, that I might take it again" (John 10:17). We know He has taken it again, and He is now in heaven - the same Person in a glorified body - and if we delight to think of Him as He was, it should be also our delight to think of Him as He is.

"Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more" (2 Cor. 5:16). We are to know Him now in the heavenly position that He has taken for us; we are to have the conscious knowledge of Him there, for in Christianity the believer is connected with Christ in glory (1 Cor. 6:17; 12:12, 13).

Abundantly Satisfied

It is a cheering thought, and no less animating than it is happy, that, richly as we are blest as saints of God, He has not exhausted His measureless ability for blessing us. And His profound delight in blessing us, being commensurate with His resources, no more can the former be impaired than the latter diminished. The present scene and character of blessing can never be reproduced, it is true, but the unexplored fields of blessing that lie before us are as ample as their fertility is everlasting. If He has endowed us with the unsearchable riches of Christ, and in the mystery enriched us with all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, yet He reserves to Himself infinitudes of fresh blessing for us when He receives us to His own rest. Nor does anything so conduce to give us a true apprehension (be it but a feeble one) of the supreme joys that await us, as the heart's bathing itself in its present blessedness. For every bit of appreciation by the Holy Spirit of our portion in and with Christ now, enlarges our capacity for apprehending by faith that to which He loves to conduct us in spirit - the terminal blessedness in His own presence.

If we look at the closing verses of the Lord's utterance in John 17, we find how He by the Holy Spirit, on the night of His betrayal, endowed His saints with a dowry, the which we, by the Holy Spirit, should now in spirit be enjoying, seeing how solid is our title to it in His own Word. 1) There is the glory given Him by the Father, which He shares with us (v. 22). 2) The Father's love equally shared with us (v. 23). 3) He further shares with us His own place in the Father's presence (v. 24). 4) The Father's name; He shares, as it were, that also with us (v. 26). Thus His inheritance from the Father is here rehearsed, and title thereto granted to His saints. The guerdon from His Father of His faultless work and faithful testimony on earth, won by toils and tears and terrors, in anguish and in blood, He solaced His own heart in its hour of untold sorrow by sharing with the men whom that Father had given Him out of the world! The Father's they were and of the Father had they been given to Him; and how could He mark His appreciation of this primary gift more definitely than by sharing with them all else that the Father had given Him? Thus the endless love of Christ to the saints is the suited answer of His heart to the Father's expressed delight in Him.

But Scripture supplies other features of our blessing. These I take to be: 1) The being in His presence at home; 2) The bearing His likeness in glory; 3) The partaking of the fatness of His house and of the river of His pleasures; 4) The speaking of His goodness and singing of His righteousness; 5) The beholding His glorification.

In Psalm 16:11 we read. "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Now, however true these words were of Christ to Jehovah, they are for His saints also, and it is Himself who opens this path of life, really by putting forth, as He will before long, the power of His resurrection to them who in the meantime are privileged to know it by faith. And to nothing short of the goal itself - His own presence - does this path conduct and His power uplift. There is fullness of joy, but nowhere save in the pavilion of His presence. And in that peculiarly blessed but yet measured way in which we apprehend His presence as it is vouchsafed to us when we are gathered to His name, is any true foretaste

enjoyed, of the blessedness for which our hearts are panting. Oh! how enjoyable must be the atmosphere which His presence fills in unclouded glory. In that supreme moment we shall taste, as never yet we have, that which the Holy Spirit speaks of as the fullness of joy! And His right hand too is our place of honor. He loves to invest us with a dignity befitting Himself when He has us at His side, and He installs us there that we may be regaled in His banqueting house under the banner of His love!

Again, in the last verse of the next Psalm, we read, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." No less distinctly here also is it that which pertains to Him which enriches us. I shall be satisfied, with Thy likeness, when I awake. Concerning Lazarus we read, "the beggar died"; he awoke in Abraham's bosom! But for us the contrast is greater. The body of our humiliation, this groaning tabernacle, is to be changed in a moment, and fashioned by His hand unto the body of His glory; and with this - His likeness - shall we be satisfied. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," said Job; and the corollary of this is, "In my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." The psalmist says, "I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." The Apostle John says, "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Each adds something to the other. Job's language is singularly literal - "In my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself and mine eyes shall behold." The psalmist is more doctrinal; he adds the righteousness in which he would behold Jehovah, and the satisfaction in which he would awake to the discovery that he bore His likeness. The Apostle is more personal, and his confidence is emphatic - "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" - the Man in the glory of God!

I only add that in John 17 there is one verse which appears to set forth the crowning joy of the saints. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." Wonderfully blessed as it is for us to share the glory of Christ, how much greater a thing as to its moral qualities is here! For it is no question of participation, but the perfectly (I say not disinterested, but) unselfish joy of beholding the glorification of Christ. It is that great sight which is to eclipse every other from everlasting to everlasting. And the principle upon which this shall constitute the culmination of all our joys is seen in John 14:28. "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I." His heart counts upon this, that our affection for Him is such that heaven's highest delight for us will be the supreme sight of His glorification - that of the Man who is Jehovah's fellow, God over all, blessed for evermore! Not until then will He see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Not until then will Jehovah rest in His love.

"But who that glorious blaze

Of living light shall tell,

Where all His brightness God displays,

And the Lamb's glories dwell?

"God and the Lamb shall there

The light and temple be,
And radiant hosts forever share
The unveiled mystery."

The All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 5

If the reader has been enabled through grace to make his own of what has passed before our minds in this series of articles, he will have a perfect remedy for all uneasiness of conscience and all restlessness of heart. The work of Christ, if only it be laid hold of by an artless faith, must of blessed necessity meet the former; and the Person of Christ, if only He be contemplated with a single eye, must perfectly meet the latter. If, therefore, we are not in the enjoyment of peace of conscience, it can only be because we are not resting on the finished work of Christ; and if the heart is not at ease, it proves that we are not satisfied with Christ Himself.

And yet, alas! how few even of the Lord's beloved people know either the one or the other. How rare it is to find a person in the enjoyment of true peace of conscience and rest of heart! Many professing Christians are not a whit in advance of the condition of Old Testament saints. They do not know the blessedness of an accomplished redemption. They are not in the enjoyment of a purged conscience. They cannot draw nigh with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body washed with pure water. They do not apprehend the grand truth of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to cry, "Abba, Father." They are, as to their experience, under law. They have never really entered into the deep blessedness of being under the reign of grace. They have life. It is impossible to doubt this. They love divine things. Their tastes, their habits, their aspirations, yes, their very exercises, their conflicts, their anxieties, doubts, and fears all go to prove the existence of divine life. They are, in a way, separated from the world, but their separation is rather negative than positive. It is more because they see the utter vanity of the world, and its inability to satisfy their hearts, than because they have found an object in Christ. They have lost their taste for the things of the world, but they have not found their place and their portion in the Son of God where He now is at the right hand of God. The things of the world cannot satisfy them, and they are not in the enjoyment of their proper heavenly standing, object, and hope; hence they are in an anomalous condition altogether; they have no certainty, no rest, no fixedness of purpose; they are not happy; they do not know their true bearings; they are neither one thing nor the other.

Is it thus with the reader? We fondly hope not. We trust he is one of those who through infinite grace "know the things that are freely given" them of God, who know that they have passed from death unto life — that they have eternal life. Who enjoy the precious witness of the Spirit; who realize their association with a risen and glorified Head in the heavens, with whom they are linked by the Holy Spirit who dwells in them; who have found their object in the Person of the blessed One whose finished work is the divine and eternal basis of their salvation and peace; and who are earnestly looking for the blessed moment when Jesus shall come to receive them to Himself, that where He is they may be also, to go no more out forever.

This is Christianity. Nothing else deserves the name. It stands out in bold and striking contrast with the spurious religiousness of the day, which is neither pure Judaism on the one hand, nor pure Christianity on the other, but a wretched mixture composed of some of the elements of each,

which unconverted people can adopt and go on with, because it sanctions the lusts of the flesh, and allows them to enjoy the pleasures and vanities of the world to their heart's content. The archenemy of Christ and of souls has succeeded in producing an awful system of religion, half Jewish, half Christian, combining in the most awful manner the world and the flesh, with a certain amount of Scripture so used as to destroy its moral force, and hinder its just application. In the meshes of this system souls are hopelessly entangled. Unconverted people are deceived into the notion that they are very good Christians indeed, and going on all right to heaven. And on the other hand the Lord's dear people are robbed of their proper place and privileges, and dragged down by this dark and depressing influence of the religious atmosphere which surrounds and almost suffocates them.

It lies not, we believe, within the compass of human language to set forth the appalling consequences of this mingling of the people of God with the people of the world in one common system of religiousness and theological belief. Its effect upon the former is to blind their eyes to the true moral glories of Christianity as set forth in the pages of the New Testament; and this is to such an extent, that if anyone attempts to unfold these glories to their view, he is regarded as a visionary enthusiast or a dangerous heretic. Its effect upon the latter is to deceive them altogether as to their true condition, character, and destiny.

It will, perhaps, be said in reply to all this, that our Lord in His wonderful discourse in Matthew 13 distinctly teaches that the wheat and the tares are to grow together. Yes; but where? In the Church? No; but "in the field"; and He tells us that "the field is the world." To confound these things is to falsify the whole Christian position, and to do away with all godly discipline in the assembly. It is to place the teaching of our Lord in Matthew 13 in opposition to the teaching of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 5.

However, we shall not pursue this subject further just now. But we must leave it for the present, and draw this part to a close by a brief reference to the third and last part of our subject; namely,

THE WORD OF CHRIST AS THE ALL-SUFFICIENT GUIDE FOR OUR PATH

If Christ's work suffices for the conscience, if His blessed Person suffices for the heart, then, most assuredly, His precious Word suffices for the path. We may assert with all possible confidence that we possess in the divine volume of Holy Scripture all we can ever need, not only to meet all the exigencies of our individual path, but also the varied necessities of the Church of God in the most minute details of her history in this world.

We are quite aware that in making this assertion we lay ourselves open to much scorn and opposition in more quarters than one. We shall be met on the one hand by the advocates of tradition, and on the other by those who contend for the supremacy of man's reason and will. But this gives us very little concern indeed. We regard the traditions of men, whether fathers, brothers, or doctors, if presented as an authority, as the small dust of the balance; and as to human reason, it can only be compared to a bat in the sunshine, dazzled by the brightness, and blindly dashing itself against objects which it cannot see.

It is the deepest joy of the Christian's heart to retire from the conflicting traditions and doctrines of men into the calm light of Holy Scripture; and when encountered by the impudent reasonings of the infidel, the rationalist, and the skeptic, to bow down his whole moral being to the authority and

power of Holy Scripture. He thankfully recognizes in the Word of God the only perfect standard for doctrine, for morals, for everything. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16).

What more can we need? Nothing. If Scripture can make a child "wise unto salvation," and if it can make a man "perfect," and furnish him "thoroughly... unto all good works," what do we want of human tradition or human reasonings? If God has written a volume for us, if He has graciously condescended to give us a revelation of His mind as to all we ought to know and think and feel and believe and do, shall we turn to a poor fellow mortal — be he ritualist or rationalist — to help us? Far away be the thought!

All praise and thanks be to our God. He has given us in His own beloved Son all we want for the conscience, for the heart, for the path — for time with all its changing scenes — for eternity with its countless ages. We can say, "Thou, O Christ, art all we want; more than all in Thee we find." There is, there could be, no lack in the Christ of God. His atonement and advocacy must satisfy all the cravings of the most deeply exercised conscience. The moral glories, the powerful attractions of His divine Person must satisfy the most intense aspirations and longings of the heart. And His peerless revelation — that priceless Volume — contains within its covers all we can possibly need from the starting point to the goal of our Christian career.

Christian reader, are not these things so? Do you not, from the very center of your renewed moral being, own the truth of them? if so, are you resting in calm repose on Christ's work? Are you delighting in His Person? Are you submitting in all things to the authority of His Word? God grant it may be so with you, and with all who profess His name. May there be a fuller, clearer, and more decided testimony to "The All-Sufficiency of Christ" till "that day."

The Approbation of the Lord

It should be joy to anyone who loves the Lord Jesus to think of having His individual peculiar approbation and love, to find that He has approved of our conduct in such and such circumstances, though none know this but ourselves who receive the approval.

But, beloved, are we really content to have an approval which Christ only knows? Let us try ourselves a little.

Are we not too desirous of man's commendation of our conduct? or, at least, that he should know and give us credit for the motives which actuate it? Are we content, so long as good is done, that nobody should know anything about us - even in the Church to be thought nothing of? that Christ alone should give us the "white stone" of His approval, and the "new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it"? Rev. 2:17.

Are we content, I say, to seek nothing else? Oh, think what the terrible evil and treachery of that heart must be that is not satisfied with Christ's special favor, but seeks honor (as we do) of one another instead! I ask you, beloved, which would be most precious to you, which you would prefer, the Lord's public owning of you as a good and faithful servant, or the private individual love of Christ resting upon you, the secret knowledge of His love and approval?

He whose heart is specially attached to Christ will respond, the latter. Both will be ours, if faithful, but we shall value this most; and there is nothing that will carry us so straight on our course as the anticipation of it.

The Atonement: When Was It Made

On this great subject of atonement it may be helpful to note that this word used so often in the Old Testament is found only once in the New; that is, Rom. 5:11, where it ought to be rendered "reconciliation." Perhaps through the erroneous use of the word here, atonement has been confounded with reconciliation, to which it stands in relation as cause to effect, reconciliation being one of the sweetest consequences of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. For if the word is not used, the idea expressed by atonement is very fully brought out in the New Testament.

And first as to the place where it was wrought, Rom. 3:25 gives us "Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth a propitiation [a "mercy-seat" as constantly in the Old Testament and so translated, Heb. 9:5] through faith in His blood." Then as to the work wrought there we have, "to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17; R.V.). In 1 John 2:2, "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours [Jews] only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Again, chapter 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Two things thus come out very fully: first, that atonement or propitiation is for God, as it is against Him all our sins have been; He it is who needed to be propitiated. But that if this is so, it is His own love that has provided the propitiation in sending His Son into the world. On the other hand, if the subject is reconciliation, it is not God that needs to be reconciled, but the sinner who was alienated from Him. Hence the importance of not mixing up the two thoughts.

As to where atonement took place, the testimony of Scripture is decisive; it took place at the cross.

It is there that when God had provided for Himself a Lamb for the sacrifice, when Christ through the eternal Spirit had offered Himself without spot to God to be the willing victim, God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that He laid upon Him the iniquities of all who have been brought to the confession of their sins under divine conviction. It was there God had made His Son an offering for sins. It was there He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and endured the judgment of God due to them in divine righteousness. It was there He drank the bitter cup to the last dreg, even the hiding of God's face from Him, till He could say, "It is finished." It was there His precious blood was shed, without which there is no remission.

Nor must the value of the offering be separated in any way from the suffering that accompanied it. (See Heb. 9:25, 26). "Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world."

How infinite the glory of that work for God when for the first time all He is in every moral attribute of His being was revealed. There all divine holiness was manifested as He hid His face from Jesus; there divine righteousness was declared in sin's righteous judgment; there the majesty of His throne was vindicated against the outrage of my sins as a rebel creature; there His truth was maintained and His love to the sinner found full expression; and all this in the place where nothing

but sin was in question. How great the triumph of the Lord Jesus in being able to turn sin, the worst work of the enemy, into the channel for displaying the brightest revelation of the glory of God.

Now this is just where the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus come in. They add nothing to the work of atonement itself, but are the answer of God's righteousness to the perfection of it, and the full evidence of His satisfaction with it. The Lord Jesus appealed to this as the proof of God's having been glorified in it (John 13:32). "If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him." And He did, for as we know from Rom. 6:4, before the dear woman that loved Him could be at the sepulcher, He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. And here is to be found the full, positive revelation of God's righteousness in setting the One that had so glorified Him in the highest heavenly glory; the Spirit there witnesses of that righteousness "because I go to the Father," as the Lord Jesus says.

Thus we learn (Heb. 1:3) that "when He had by Himself purged our sins" - or made purification for sins - He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." He never sat down there until He had settled the whole question of sin. And this is pressed to its full consequences for us in chapter 10. "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.... For by one offering He bath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us.... Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Again, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." But if He be raised, it is the magnificent proof to everyone that believes in Him, that the sins that He bore on the cross are gone forever.

Nothing can be more conclusive then that the testimony of Scripture to the cross as the place where the atoning work was done. The resurrection is the necessary answer to its perfection in the righteousness of God, and for the satisfaction of His own heart. In all this we must ever remember that if the righteousness of God demanded the sacrifice, it was His love that provided it, a love that found its answer in the devotedness of the Son to the Father's glory, that would give Himself even to death for the accomplishment of the counsels of divine and infinite love.

Be Careful for Nothing

What shall I do then? Go to God. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Phil. 4:6. Then in the midst of all the care you can give thanks.

We see the exceeding grace of God in this. It is not that you are to wait till you find out if what you want is the will of God. No. "Let your requests be made known." Have you a burden on your heart? Now go with your request to God. He does not say that you will get it. Paul, when he prayed, had for answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee." But peace will keep your heart and mind - not you will keep this peace.

Is He ever troubled by the little things that trouble us? Do they shake His throne? He thinks of us, we know, but He is not troubled; and the peace that is in God's heart is to keep ours.

I go and carry it all to Him, and I find Him all quiet about it. It is all settled.

He knows quite well what He is going to do. I have laid the burden on the throne that never shakes, with the perfect certainty that God takes an interest in me, and the peace He is in, keeps my heart; and I can thank Him even before the trouble has passed. I can say, Thank God, He takes an interest in me. It is a blessed thing that I can have this peace, and thus go and make my request - perhaps a very foolish one - and, instead of brooding over trials, that I can be with God about them.

It is sweet to me to see that while He carries us up to heaven, He comes down and occupies Himself with everything of ours here. While our affections are occupied with heavenly things, we can trust God for earthly things.

As Paul says, "Without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us." 2 Cor. 7:5, 6. It was worth being cast down, to get that kind of comfort. Is He a God afar off, and not a God nigh at hand?

He does not give us to see before us, for then the heart would not be exercised; but, though we see not Him, He sees us, and comes down to give us all that kind of comfort in the trouble.

Be Ye Followers of Me

If we are living the life of Christ our joys will be outside of this scene, excepting the joy of obedience and service (John 4:34; 15:11). The rich young man treasured blessings here (Mark 10:22), but Paul was beyond that, and he says, "Be followers of me" (Phil. 3). He saw Christ in glory so that the things that were gain to him here he counted loss for Christ. It was not that he might know Christ as Savior, for he knew that; but he had Christ before him to meet and to be like at the end of his journey, and that caused him to count all that was of worth to him as a man in the flesh as "loss" and "dung."

The Blind Beggar: Much Needed Today

"A blind beggar!" What an expression of helplessness and need! What a picture of the real condition of the Jewish nation, and of every unregenerate soul! Let us turn aside for a few moments and gaze upon this singularly striking picture or, to speak more correctly, this most interesting piece of living history, this scene from real life.

The study of the 9th chapter of John suggests two very important questions; namely, 1) What has Jesus done for me? 2) What is Jesus to me? These questions are very distinct and closely connected. We shall find them both forcibly illustrated in the glowing narrative of "The Blind Beggar."

At the close of the 8th chapter we find the Lord Jesus making His escape from the rude violence of the Jews whose wrath was raised to the highest pitch by His pointed and powerful testimony. "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." Such was the return which the blessed Savior met for all His grace and truth. But no amount of rudeness and violence could interrupt Him in His unwearied course of service. The stream of goodness flowed on unhindered by all man's wickedness. If it could not find a channel in one place, it found it in another. If it failed of an issue here, it sought it there. The precious grace in the heart of Jesus must find an object somewhere. Eternal blessings on His name!

"And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." Thus it was with this blessed Workman. He pursued His path of service unhindered by all the enmity and opposition of the human heart. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Yes, and that light should shine despite all man's efforts to put it out. The stones of the Jews could not hinder the divine Workman from working the works of God, and these works were to be made manifest in the case of any poor blind beggar who crossed His path in this dark and sinful world. How blessed to know that the most glorious, the most characteristic work of God is displayed in the salvation of lost, guilty, hell deserving sinners!

"When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."

Reader, note this carefully. There is more involved in this mysterious act of Christ than we might at first sight imagine. The most likely way in the world to blind one who has his eyesight would be to put clay upon his eyes; but here the Lord Jesus opens the blind eyes of the beggar by that very means. What do we see in this? Just the deep and precious mystery of the Person and work of

Christ Himself, as He says at the end of this profound chapter: "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." v. 39.

This is indeed solemn! "For judgment I am come into this world." How is this? Did He not come to seek and to save that which was lost? So He Himself tells us again and again. Why then speak of "judgment"? The meaning is simply this: the object of His mission was salvation; the moral effect of His life was judgment. He judged no one, and yet He judged everyone. The life of Christ down here was the most powerful test that ever was applied to man. Hence He could say, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin.... If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father." John 15:22-24.

It is well to see this effect of the character and life of Christ down here. He was the light of the world, and this light acted in a double way. It convicted and converted. It judged and it saved. Furthermore, it dazzled by its heavenly brightness all those who thought they saw, while at the same time it lightened all those who really felt their moral and spiritual blindness. He came not to judge, but to save; and yet when come, He judged every man, and put every man to the test. He was different from all around Him, as light in the midst of darkness; and yet He saved all who accepted the judgment and took their true place.

The same thing is observable when we contemplate the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." 1 Cor. 1:18, 23, 24. Looked at from a human point of view, the cross presented a spectacle of weakness and foolishness. But looked at from a divine point of view, it was the exhibition of power and wisdom. The "Jew," looking at the cross through the hazy medium of traditionary religion, stumbled over it; the "Greek," looking at it from the fancied heights of philosophy, despised it as a contemptible thing. But the faith of a poor sinner, looking at the cross from the depths of conscious guilt and ruin, found in it a divine answer to every question, a divine supply for every need. The death of Christ, like His life, judged every man; and yet it saves all those who accept the judgment and take their true place.

Now it is very interesting to find the germ of all this in our Lord's dealings with the blind beggar. He put clay on his eyes and sent him to the pool of Siloam. This was "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." It was the application of the doctrine of Christ by the Spirit through the Word. Thus it must ever be. If a man who thinks he can see, looks at that doctrine, it will blind him. If a man who is blind has that doctrine applied to his heart by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word, it will open his eyes and fill him with divine light.

But let us trace the history of this blind beggar. No sooner were his eyes opened than he became an object of interest to all around. "The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he." The change was manifest to all. He might have lived and died in beggary and blindness, unheeded, unnoticed; but he had been brought into personal contact with the Son of God, and that contact had produced a mighty change which could not fail to attract the attention of all around. Thus it must ever be. It is impossible for anyone to have to do with Christ

and not experience something which cannot be hidden from those who are looking on. Personal contact with Christ is a divine reality. There is life and power in the very touch of Jesus. One believing look at the Savior of sinners - the Quickener of the dead - produces the most astonishing results.

We are more and more impressed, each day and each year of our existence, that the great object of preaching and writing - of oral or written ministry - is to bring the soul and Christ together. Till this is done, there is positively nothing done. Sermons may be preached and volumes may be written, but unless the soul of the sinner or the soul of the saint is brought into actual, living, and life-giving contact with the Son of God, there is no real, tangible, permanent result reached. The blind man in our chapter might have gone on all his days in his helpless and needy condition, even though surrounded by all the appliances of the Jewish system. Nothing was of any value to him save the name of Jesus. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good."

But then I must be brought into vital connection with that divine and all-powerful name in order to partake of the good. I may go on forever, saying, "None but Jesus" and be nothing better. The devils know that none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good, but it avails them nothing; and men may know, or profess to know, the same thing, and they may mistake the profession for the reality, and so deceive themselves and perish eternally. There must be a living link connecting the soul with Christ in order to lift the soul out of its condition of spiritual blindness and poverty; and not only so, but the power of this living union must be maintained and habitually realized in order to keep up in the soul the freshness and fruitfulness of the divine life. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him; rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." Col. 2:6, 7.

Here we have the two grand and essential points; namely, first, receiving Christ, and second, walking in Him. The first meets all the need of the sinner; the second perfectly answers all the demands of the saint. Many there are who seem to receive Christ, and yet do not walk with Him. This is the secret of most of the meagerness and poverty which one meets among professing Christians. There is not the habitual walking in Christ. Other things intervene. We get occupied with the mere machinery of religiousness, with meetings, with ministry, with men and things. It may even happen that we allow our work, our very service, to come in between our souls and Christ. All these things which surely are right enough in their right place, may through Satan's craft and our lack of vigilance, actually displace Christ in our souls, and super induce barrenness and lifeless formality.

O beloved Christian reader, let us seek to walk in abiding communion with Jesus! May we keep Him ever before our souls in all His fullness and preciousness. Then shall our testimony be clear, decided, and unmistakable. Our path shall be as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. May it be thus with all the people of God in this day of shallow profession!

The Blind Beggar: Much Needed Today

In pondering the record of this blind beggar, we notice a very striking development of character in the different classes of persons that are brought forward. In the poor man himself, we see an earnestness, a simplicity and a reality which we greatly covet. He illustrates very forcibly the value and importance of honestly following the light as it shines upon our path. "Unto every one that hath

shall be given," is a motto plainly visible on the face of our narrative; and a precious motto is a valuable incitement to a zealous and devoted career. It would manifestly have served the poor man's worldly interest to cushion the truth as to what had been done for him. He might have enjoyed the benefit of the work of Christ, and yet avoided the rough path of testimony for His name in the face of the world's hostility. He might have enjoyed his eyesight and at the same time retained his place within the pale of respectable religious profession. He might have reaped the fruit of Christ's work and yet escaped the reproach of confessing His name.

How often is this the case! Alas, how often! Thousands are very well pleased to hear of what Jesus has done, but they do not want to be identified with His outcast and rejected name. In other words, to use a modern and very popular phrase, They want to make the best of both worlds - a sentiment from which every truehearted lover of Christ must shrink with abhorrence - an idea of which genuine faith is wholly ignorant. It is obvious that the subject of our narrative knew nothing of any such maxim. He had had his eyes opened and he could not but speak of it and tell who did it and how it was done. He was an honest man. He had no mixed motive, no sinister object, no undercurrent. Happy for him! It is a terrible thing to have an undercurrent in the soul, a mixed motive in the heart, a personal interest before the mind, a secondary object before the eye. Such things give the deathblow to all genuine, practical Christianity and true discipleship. If we want to follow a rejected Christ, the heart must be thoroughly free. The true disciple must have his heart freed from all the objects of personal interest, as well as of expediency. These things are sure to prove extinguishers in Satan's hand for quenching the light of truth in the souls of men. A man may be ignorant of many things, but if he only honestly follows the light which God has graciously poured upon his pathway, he will assuredly get more. On the other hand, if for any object whatever, if to gain the most plausible and attractive end, light be extinguished, truth cushioned, testimony quashed, there is an end to all true devotedness.

Reader, do give this point your most serious attention. See that you are acting up to your light. It is a great thing when each fresh ray of light communicated produces a step in the right direction. This will always be so when the conscience is in a right condition. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. 4:18. Again, "If... thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." Matt. 6:22, 23. Solemn thought! "Give glory to the LORD your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains." Jer. 13:16. We know of nothing more awfully dangerous than familiarity with truth, without an exercised conscience. It throws one directly into the hands of Satan; whereas an exercised conscience - an upright mind - a single eye - keep us steadily going on in the holy, peaceful, lightsome ways of God. Hence, in our Lord's words in Luke 11 there is marked and beautiful progress. "If," He adds, "thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle cloth give thee light." In other words, the man who has a single eye will not only have light for himself, but he will be a light-bearer for others; but a man whose eye is not single, who has a mixed motive, an undercurrent, a secondary object, a personal end, is not only involved in moral darkness himself, but he is a dishonor to the name of Christ, an instrument in the hand of Satan, and a stumbling block in the way of his fellow men.

This is a truth of the deepest solemnity in this day of easy profession and worldly religiousness. There is a wide diffusion of evangelical doctrine; and while we have to be truly thankful for the

doctrine and its wide diffusion, we have to watch against the use which the devil is making of it. We are deeply impressed with the conviction that the self-indulgent, superficial profession of the present hour is paving the way for the dark and appalling infidelity of the future. We feel the urgent need of something far more profound, earnest, and wholehearted. We need more exercise of conscience. We are not sufficiently penetrated with the genuine spirit of the gospel. The enemy has not been able to shut out the pure light of the gospel. The dark cloud of ignorance and superstition which for many a long and dreary century had settled down upon Christendom, has been rolled away, and the bright beams of revelation's heavenly lamp have poured themselves upon the human mind and dissipated the gloom. We bless God for this. We are not insensible to the craft and subtlety of the enemy, nor can we shut our eyes to the startling fact that evangelical profession without an exercised conscience, is one of the devil's most potent agencies at the present moment. The doctrines of grace are widely promulgated and professed, but instead of being used for the subjugation of nature, they are made to furnish a plea for self-indulgence. The evangelical religion of the day in which our lot is cast is of a very light and fragile texture, ill adapted for rough weather. We are inclined to think that were the Church to be again visited by the stormy blast of persecution, it would thin her ranks amazingly; but it would doubtless be the means of developing a veteran band of witnesses, for amid much that is painfully superficial there is, we are persuaded, much that is real, solid, and true.

In one word then we urge upon the Christian reader the importance of honestly following the light communicated, and we use the case of the blind beggar to this end. Nothing could daunt him. Nothing could shut his mouth. His light could not be extinguished. When "the neighbor" inquired, "Is not this he that sat and begged?" his ready answer was, "I am he." When they inquired further, "How were thine eyes opened?" he unhesitatingly replied, "A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight." When they proceeded further to ask, "Where is He?" he as frankly replied, "I know not." He neither lagged behind nor rushed beyond. but honestly acted up to his light. This is precisely what is needed. He had been brought into personal contact with Christ, and that personal contact formed the broad and solid basis of his testimony. This, we repeat, is what is needed. We should not go one hair's breadth beyond the measure of real personal knowledge of Christ; but then we should act faithfully up to that measure. It is our happy privilege to have to do with Christ, each one for himself, and our profession should be the result of that personal dealing. We are in danger of being merely propped up by the influences around, instead of being sustained by the vital principle within. In the case of the blind beggar, the external influences were all hostile, but he boldly confessed the truth, and that, moreover, just in proportion to his own personal experience, and no further. He acted up to his light and we shall see in the sequel, he got more.

Look at him in the presence of the Pharisees. These men, governed by blind prejudice, had deliberately closed their eyes against the light of the truth. Instead of calmly sitting down to investigate the pure and heavenly doctrines of that blessed One whose voice had sounded in their midst, they "had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." It was, therefore, obviously impossible that they could arrive at the truth while their eyes were covered with the bandage of prejudice. They professed to see; therefore their sin remained.' Solemn thought! "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." The permanency of sin is judicially

connected with the empty profession of sight. A man who knows he is blind can have his eyes opened; but what can be done for the man who thinks he can see while at the same time his eyes are covered with the bandage of blind prejudice? Alas! nothing. The light which is in him is darkness, and how great is that darkness! These Pharisees could talk of keeping the Sabbath, and of giving God the glory, and yet say of Christ, "We know that this man is a sinner." So much for religiousness! A Sabbath without Christ is a vanity. To talk of giving God the praise otherwise than through Christ is a deadly delusion. And yet it was thus with those poor Pharisees. They were disturbed by the testimony of the poor man. They would fain have quashed it. Most gladly would they have put the extinguisher of their official authority upon that dazzling, disturbing, detested light. But they could not. They tried to enlist in their service a cold-hearted expediency as personified in the parents, but in vain. The parents feared the Jews. They did not want to lose caste. They knew nothing of Christ, of His work, or of His Person, and they were not going to encounter obloquy or reproach for Him. They knew nothing about the marvelous cure that had been effected. "He is of age," said they, "ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews."

What a terrible snare is religious position! It is sure to act as a hindrance in the path of bold decision for Christ. If I have to pause in order to consider how such and such a step will affect my religious position, my influence, or my reputation, my eye is not single, my body is full of darkness; the very light which I profess to have is darkness, and I shall be an instrument in the hand of Satan, and a stumbling block in the way of men.

How refreshing to turn from the dark background of prejudice and heartlessness, and contemplate the fearless honesty of the blind beggar. We must confess we greatly admire it, and long to imitate it. He did not know much, but what he did know, he turned to good account. He boldly declared what Jesus had done for him. "One thing I know," said this noble witness, "that, whereas I was blind, now I see." There was no gainsaying this. All the arguments of the Pharisees could not shake his confidence in the fact that his eyes had been opened. It was this that constituted the power of his testimony. It was based upon a plain, palpable fact. The man that sat and begged was now sitting with his eyes open, and it was "a man called Jesus" that did it. Terrible fact! And yet the man was ignorant, but he was honest. He told the plain truth, and proved it in his person. He did not know much about Jesus. He neither knew who He was nor where He was; but he knew and said quite enough to disturb the Pharisees amazingly. Higher and higher he rose in his testimony. The gross irrationalism of his enemies actually forced him into clearer and yet clearer light until at length he breaks forth in these memorable and irresistible accents, "If this man were not of God, He could do nothing."

It is positively quite a feast to read this record. To see an honest man boldly grappling with religious prejudice and intolerance, is something to do the heart good. Would to God there were many nowadays formed on the model of this blind beggar! We know of no more powerful breakwater wherewith to stem the rising tide of infidelity than the bold and vigorous testimony of those who have experienced aught at the hand of Christ. If such would only declare plainly what the Lord has done for them, and base their testimony on what is plain and palpable - so plain and palpable as to be unanswerable - what power there would be! What point! What pungency! In the case before us we see that one poor ignorant man who had sat as a blind beggar was more than a match for the Pharisees and all their

reasonings. He proved a most burdensome stone

to them - so burdensome that they could not endure him. "Thou wast altogether born in sins," said they, "and dost thou teach us? And they excommunicated him" (Margin).

Happy man! He had followed the light in simplicity and sincerity. He had borne an honest testimony to the truth. His eyes had been opened to see, and his lips to testify. It was no "matter of wrong or wicked lewdness," but simple truth, and for that they cast him out. He had never troubled them in the days of his blindness and beggary. Perhaps some of them may have proudly and ostentatiously tossed him a trifling alms as they walked past, thus getting a name among their fellows for benevolence; but now this blind beggar had become a powerful witness. Words of truth now flowed from his lips - truth far too powerful and piercing for them to stand - and they thrust him out.

Happy, thrice-happy man! again we say. This was the brightest moment in his career. These men, though they knew it not, had done him a real service. They had thrust him into the most

honored position that any mortal can occupy; namely, a position of identification with Christ. And only see how the tender heart of the good Shepherd was moved by the bleatings of this outcast sheep! "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" This is deeply touching. No sooner had the poor sheep been rudely thrust out from the fold than the true Shepherd flew to his side in order to lead him up higher and bold and decided step. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord,

I believe. And he worshipped Him." This is enough. This faithful witness here reaps a rich reward. He had followed on with plain decision along the path of simple, earnest testimony for Christ according to his light and, as a consequence, he was cast out by the religion of this world. He was forced outside the camp; but there Jesus found him and revealed Himself to his soul, and the curtain drops on this highly favored man as a worshiper at the feet of Incarnate Deity. What a place! What a contrast to the place in which we found him at the opening of his history! What a career! - first a blind beggar - then an earnest witness - and finally an enlightened worshiper prostrate at the feet of the Son of God. Happy, highly honored man! May the Lord raise up many such in these days of cold indifference and superficial profession! O for an earnest heart true to Christ - a heart that never calculates results, but presses on after Jesus regardless of consequences!

Boundless Beauty in Christ

In connection with Christ as our substitute, what a thought is His divine glory! What! the Man before whom every knee shall bow - the Man before whom all shall stand in the day of judgment - that Man my Substitute! There is no place in the dust low enough, no word adequate to express what I feel, that such a man should have taken my place and borne my judgment! He, as the substitute, is my wellspring of life, and I am an adopted son in Him. I am also His servant, and I may share His sufferings as the Servant. Ours may seem a very insignificant path of service, but He may have the thought of its being just the path in which we may share His sufferings.

If you go through the world as a child of God, and mark the sorrows of Christ with the thought of sharing them in some small measure, you will see if they do not in this aspect also become very precious to you, showing that what His life was down here, yours is to be. Are we to expect better fare, a smoother path, than our blessed Lord? If the thousandth part of His sorrows came on one of us, we could not bear it; it would destroy us. But we can in our little measure follow after and taste of His cup of sorrow.

Is it not enough to wring my heart when I see Christ the Son of God becoming Son of man to bear all that He bore down here? And then He went back to God. Can I see Him here and see Him there, and not fall down and worship? Oh, what a revelation of God in that Nazarene! Can I know Christ and not know God? Impossible! And that Christ is my life, and the keeper of it. He is my anointed Savior. I belong to Him. Is it in the sheep to keep itself? No, but in the Shepherd.

Mark the inseparability of believers and Christ in the mind of God; when He leaves His Father's throne, His people are to be set with Him on His throne, and they are to be owned as He Himself is. God's thought is to express His delight in that Christ who has bought a people with His own blood; the Father's house is prepared for them, and they are welcome there, even as Christ is. On earth the disciples went wherever Christ went. When He comes to take us home, we shall be forever with Him; and it will be as the saved ones brought near to God by His own blood.

When I see Christ coming out of glory, bearing my sin in His own body, and going back again to glory, and going on for nineteen hundred years waiting and gathering poor sinners into the Father's house, there is something exquisitely beautiful! My heart is stolen away by everything Christ does. Is there no beauty in the walk of Him who did all for you? Don't you want to be like Him? Have you not a model before you that attracts the whole heart? How we should long to resemble this Christ, and to have His mind! I have a Christ in heaven, and I desire to meet that Christ's thoughts in everything, and to be one with Him in the world where He was rejected and crucified.

The Brook That Dried up

1 Kings 17:2-7

The prophet has been alone with God in the secret place of prayer. Then for a brief moment he witnesses the good confession in the presence of the apostate king. The future, however, holds a far greater service for Elijah; the day will come when he will not only witness for God in the presence of the king, but he will discomfort the assembled hosts of Baal, and turn the nation of Israel to the living God. But the time is not yet ripe for Carmel. The prophet is not ready to speak, the nation not ready to hear. Israel must suffer the years of famine ere they will listen to the Word of God; Elijah must be trained in secret before he can speak for God. The prophet must take the lonely way of Cherith and dwell in distant Zarephath before he stands on the Mount of Carmel.

The first step that leads to Cannel in the west, must be taken in another direction. "Get thee hence and turn thee eastward," is the word of the Lord. In God's due time He will bring him there in a right condition to be used. To become a vessel fit for the Master's use, he must dwell for a time in solitary places and travel by rough ways, therein to learn his own weakness and the mighty power of God.

Every servant of God has his Cherith before he reaches his Carmel. Joseph, on the road to universal dominion, must have his Cherith. He must pass by way of the pit and the prison to reach the throne. Moses must have his Cherith at the backside of the desert before he becomes the leader of God's people through the wilderness. And was not the Lord Himself alone in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan, and with the wild beasts, before He came forth in public ministry before men? Not indeed, as with ourselves, to discover our weakness and be stripped of our self-sufficiency, but rather to reveal His infinite perfections, and discover to us His perfect suitability for the work which none but Himself could accomplish. The testing circumstances that were used to reveal the perfections of Christ are needed in our case to bring to light our imperfections, that all may be judged in the presence of God, and we may thus become vessels fitted for His use.

This indeed was the first lesson that Elijah had to learn at Cherith - the lesson of the empty vessel. "Get thee hence," said the Lord, "and hide thyself." The man who is going to witness for God must learn to keep himself out of sight. In order to be preserved from making something of himself before men, he must learn his own nothingness before God. Elijah must spend three and a half years in hidden seclusion with God before he spends one day in prominence before men.

But God has other lessons for Elijah. Is he to exercise faith in the living God before Israel? Then he must first learn to live by faith from day to day in secret before God. The brook and the ravens are provided by God to meet His servant's needs, but the confidence of Elijah must be in the unseen and living God, and not in things seen - in brooks and ravens. "I have commanded," said the Lord, and faith rests in the word of the Lord.

Moreover, to enjoy God's provision the prophet must be in the place of God's appointment. The word to Elijah is, "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." It was not left to Elijah to choose his hiding place, he must submit to God's choice. There only would he enjoy the blessings from God.

Moreover, implicit obedience to the word of the Lord is the only path of blessing. And Elijah took this path, for we read, "He went and did according to the word of the Lord." He went where the Lord told him to go, he did what the Lord told him to do. When the Lord says, "Go and do'," as to the lawyer in the Gospel, unquestioning and immediate, obedience is the only path of blessing.

But the brook Cherith had a yet harder and deeper lesson for the prophet - the lesson of the brook that dried up. The Lord had said, "Thou shalt drink of the brook"; in obedience to the word "he drank of the brook"; and then we read, words which at first sound so passing strange, "the brook dried up." The very brook that the Lord had provided, of which He had bid the prophet drink, runs dry. What can it mean? Has Elijah after all taken a wrong step, and is he in a false position? Impossible! God had said, "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." Was he doing the wrong thing? Far from it; had not God said, "Thou shalt drink of the brook"? Beyond all question he was in the right place, he was doing the right thing. He was in the place of God's appointment; he was obeying the word of the Lord - and yet the brook dried up.

How painful this experience, how mysterious this providence. To be in the place of God's appointment, to be acting in obedience to His express commands, and yet suddenly to be called to face the complete failure of the provision that God has made for the daily need. How testing for faith. Had not Elijah boldly said before the king that he stood before the living God? Now he is confronted with the dying brook to test the reality of his faith in the living God. Will his faith in the living God stand firm when earthly streams run dry? If God lives, what matter if the brook dries? God is greater than all the mercies He bestows. Mercies may be withdrawn, but God remains. The prophet must learn to trust in God rather than in the gifts that He gives. That the Giver is greater than His gifts is the deep lesson of the brook that dried up.

Is not the story of the brook that dried up told in a different setting when, at a later day, sickness and death invaded the quiet home life at Bethany? Two sisters bereft of their only brother came face to face with the brook that dried up. But their trial turned to the "glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." That which brings glory to the Son, carries blessing to the saints. If Lazarus was taken, Jesus the Son of God remained, taking occasion by the failure of earthly streams to reveal a fountain of love that never fails, and a source of power that has no limit. So, too, in the prophet's day, the brook that dried up became the occasion of unfolding greater glories of Jehovah, and richer blessings for Elijah. It was but an incident used by God to take the prophet on his journey from Cherith - the place of the failing brook - to the home at Zarephath, there to discover the meal that never failed, the oil that did not waste, and the God that raised the dead. If God allows the brook to dry up, it is because He has some better, brighter portion for His beloved servant.

Nor is it otherwise with the people of God today. We all like to have some earthly resource to draw upon; yet how often, in the ways of a Father that knoweth we have need of these things, we have to face the brook that dries up. In different forms it crosses our path: perhaps by bereavement, or by the breakdown of health, or by the sudden failure of some source of supply, we find ourselves

beside the brook that has dried up. It is well if, in such moments - rising above the ruin of our earthly hopes, the failure of human props - we can by faith in the living God accept all from Him. The very trial we shall then find to be the means God is using to unfold to us the vast resources of His heart of love, and lead our souls into deeper, richer blessing than we have ever known.

Canaan and the Armor of God

Read Eph. 6:10-20

It might seem strange at first sight that in this epistle, where there is the fullest unfolding of the privileges of the children of God, conflict should be brought out; however, we are often not aware of the character of the conflict from not knowing our privileges. Here it is found we are specially in conflict and in a conflict that we do not comprehend until we realize the privileges which this epistle specially unfolds.

In Galatians there is conflict, but it is a conflict between flesh and Spirit - the flesh lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; but in Ephesians it is not flesh but spiritual wickedness in high places (or "wicked spirits in the heavenly places"; margin). We have to overcome flesh, and there is a very close connection between these two conflicts; still they are distinct.

In Ephesians it is a new creation. Christ has ascended up on high - "He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." So completely has He taken us out of the power of Satan that He can make us the vessels of His service. He has taken us out of the world and then sent us into it; and if we thus stand associated with Christ (which is the privilege of every Christian though all do not realize it), we must expect all the conflict associated with the place into which we are brought. In proportion as we realize that we are the vessels of heavenly service, we get this special character of conflict.

You cannot cross Jordan without finding the Canaanite and the Perizzite in the land. There are the trials and perils of the wilderness which test our hearts - all know more or less of the weary way testing our hearts and discovering what is in them; but wilderness experience is not the same as conflict in the land. When Joshua got into the place of the privileges of the people of God, he was in the place of conflict. God has set Christ as a man in the glory because He (as a man) has perfectly glorified God as to sin. Christ has not only died for our sins, but we have died with Him (dead with Christ is what Jordan is), and we are raised up and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; thus associated, dead and risen, with Him, we are brought into the place where all the conflict is. It is most valuable and precious to get distinctly hold of this. Many a Christian has not realized it.

There is many a one still in Egypt, holding the value of the blood on the doorposts, but knowing nothing of the deliverance accomplished at the Red Sea. Israel had to stand still and see the salvation of God; this answers to the death and resurrection of Christ. I am out of Egypt; the judgment which fell on the Egyptians has saved me. God has raised up Christ and given Him glory that our faith and hope might be in God. Just as every poor sinner has been driven out of the earthly paradise because sin is complete in the first Adam, so am I taken out of this world into the heavenly paradise in the last Adam because righteousness is complete. God raising up Christ and giving Him glory proves that the question of sin has been all settled in Christ on the cross, and in virtue

of this He is sitting where He is, at the right hand of God. This passage through the wilderness is to humble and prove us. Our perseverance is tested by God leading us through the path in which Christ was found implicitly faithful.

Israel went through that great and terrible wilderness where there were the fiery serpents, scorpions and drought, and where there was no water. God brought them water out of the rock of flint, fed them with the manna to humble them and prove them, to do them good at their latter end. They came to Jordan, they passed it, they got into the land, they ate of the old corn, and the land was theirs.

In the wilderness and Canaan we get two characters of Christian experience - one, the life down here; the other, the position in the heavenlies. We are not only a testimony to the world but also to principalities and powers in the heavenlies - "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." He "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places"; but though that is all true as to title, as to fact the Canaanite and the Perizzite are still in the land to dispute the possession. We have our place in the power of the Spirit of God.

Christ having gone before, our place is sure to faith; but the Canaanite is not yet destroyed - Christ's enemies are not yet put under His feet, so conflict characterizes the place of the Lord's redeemed people. When Joshua got into the land, he met a man with a drawn sword. Fighting was to characterize their possession of the land, and when Joshua asks, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" the answer was, "Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come." They were the redeemed of the Lord - the Lord's host - so completely the Lord's that He uses them as His servants in conflict to subdue His enemies.

They must "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," and they cannot fight the Lord's battles if the flesh is at work. With an Achan in the camp there can be no victory, and therefore we must be practically dead to fight successfully, not merely reckoning ourselves dead, but be always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our body.

Paul, as a servant, always carried with him the sense of this, not as a title merely, but "Paul" was kept completely down, always bearing about in his body the dying of Jesus; nothing of Paul appeared, it was Jesus only. As soon as they crossed the Jordan (Jordan is death and resurrection with Christ), they were circumcised - death is practically applied. And in like manner after they had crossed the Red Sea they had to drink of the bitter water - really the salt water. They had been saved by it, they must now drink it. "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit" (Isa. 38:16).

As soon as we get in heavenly places we get the "old corn" - we find Christ there. We feed on Him; but we have to be circumcised, practically putting off the body of the flesh. Israel got into the land and had to be circumcised; their title they knew, but they had not taken the ground of being practically dead and risen (from Egypt). If a man is practically dead and risen what has he to do with this world? A man

dead, and thus taken out of the world, has to go through the world and live in it again if God so will it. We have to run across the wilderness to glory. As one associated with the Lord I am the witness

and testimony to the world of what a heavenly Christ is. I am to be an imitator of God. I shall be seeking other souls to enjoy it with me. If we are endeavoring to serve the Lord, shall we not find hindrances? If seeking to maintain the Lord's people in the place of fidelity to all this, do you think Satan will let

you alone? There will be the wiles of Satan to get saints into his power, and we have to withstand his stratagems even more than his power. Infidelity and superstition in its various forms are opposed to us; consequently, we need the whole armor of God the moment we come in. We shall not get through in our own strength; we need the strength of the Lord and the power of His might; we need the whole armor. Not one piece must be wanting. The armor must be of God; human armor will not ward off the attacks of Satan; confidence in that armor will engage us in the combat to make us fall before an enemy stronger and more crafty than we. Let us see what this complete armor is.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." This is the first thing, looking at what we call the subjective part. Our state comes first, and there is no divine activity until the heart is perfectly in order. The loins are the seat of strength when duly girt but represent the intimate affections and movements of the heart. The figure is taken from the habits of the country where these instructions were given; they wore long garments, which hindered their working unless girded up. We get the expression in Job 38:3, "Gird up now thy loins like a man"; (that is, to see what he had to say to God.) It was the power of truth applied to everything that takes place in the heart; it is not doctrine, but truth practically applied. The Lord said, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." God has sent into the midst of the world all that can judge man according to what God is. Christ is the center of the word; He was the light of the world, He revealed the thoughts of many hearts. He was here as a man and revealed what God was, and the world was judged by it. He comes, and brings all that is divine and heavenly in a man (Christ) in direct contact with all that is contrary to God in this world. Satan, as the god of this world, led man against Christ. Some fancy that he has ceased to be the god and prince of this world; but though the cross broke his title, it was not until the cross (where man openly ranged himself under Satan against God) that he became its prince. Truth came into the world - Christ Himself, the truth. The truth of God brought right to men's hearts discovers their thoughts and intents. Now, when I get this word effectually applied to me, I get the girdle of truth.

When all that God has said in His Word and the unseen realities He reveals have their true force and application to my heart, my loins are girt, my garments are not dragging in the mire of this world, my thoughts are not wandering, and the condition of my heart is, so to speak, tucked up ready for service, whatever that may be. We do not get into this conflict until we get into this place. We get the conflict of the old man, but that is Egypt. In order to get the victory over Satan and carry on the Lord's battles, I must realize my position according to the truth just as Israel overcame by realizing the promises of God.

First thing of all, my heart must be completely tested and subjected to a heavenly word. The Lord said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven." Christ brings this heavenly truth before us and says, Does what is in your heart correspond with this? When this word becomes a positive delight to us, we get the taste and appreciation of heavenly things - the things that are lovely, and of good report - which He has brought to us. I get on the one hand judgment of all flesh in me, and on the other,

the blessedness of what Christ is. Wherever the loins are girt about with truth, there will be confidence of heart, and the soul will be steadfast, there will be no turning back in the conflict to judge ourselves. Our souls, so to speak, will be naturally with God, there will be occupation of heart with Christ, and there will be the Holy Spirit taking of the things which are Christ's and showing them to us.

The result of this girding of the loins is that a man's condition is the effect of truth. It was Christ's condition. He was the truth, and my condition will be like Christ's in proportion as the truth is in effect on my heart; the affections and heart right, I pass through the world in spirit with Him. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness." All this, mark, is practical righteousness; we do not want armor with God, we want it against Satan.

If I am an inconsistent man, going to serve God without the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left - without practical godliness - Satan will be sure to bring it up. In preaching, for instance, if your walk is not consistent, the world will say you are no better than they, and Satan will then have power against you. If you are walking according to Christ because your heart is according to Christ, you have on the breastplate of righteousness; but unless a man has a good conscience, he will be a coward and afraid of being detected. With a good conscience we can go on boldly; the condition of the soul where Christ is revealed is truth, and the walk of the man is all right - there is nothing for Satan to lay hold of.

The loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness, I have then to see that my feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. I pass through the world with my feet shod. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace." In this path there is no selfishness; selfishness is for maintaining its rights, but that is not having my feet shod with peace. Self is subdued if I am following Christ. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Learning of Christ, he carries peace with him - the soul is at peace with God, the conscience is at rest. His feet are shod with peace, and He carries through the world the spirit and character of Christ. He has on the breastplate of righteousness. (To be continued)

"As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is tried: He is a buckler to all them that trust in Him. For who is God, save the Lord? and who is a rock, save our God? God is my strength and power; and He maketh my way perfect." 2 Sam. 22:31-33.

Canaan and the Armor of God

Read Eph. 6:10-20

What was the path of the blessed Lord? There was nothing in question as to His state. He went untouched with all that man could bring against Him; His feet were shod. So with him who follows Christ; he can bring out the spirit and character of Christ wherever he goes. It may raise hatred, as it did with Christ - His perfect love brought out the hatred of man. But a subdued, godly, upright man will be a peaceful man in passing through the world, and although man may not speak peaceably to him, as much as lieth in him, he is to live peaceably with all men. Thus we get it in both aspects - the path is characterized by the spirit of grace and peace, and there is righteousness and truth. The state of the heart first right, loins girt with truth, righteousness for a breastplate, and feet shod with peace, the soul subjectively right, I can then take up the shield of

faith. Subjectively right I have not to think of myself.

A man walking with nothing on his conscience is free; if not walking right, he will be occupied with himself. The mere existence of an evil nature does not suppose a bad conscience but yielding to it does. We are not told to confess sin, but sins. It is easy to confess sin, easy to say, "I am a poor sinful creature," but that generally is to excuse sins. I have failed to keep the flesh down. Of course I can never say I have not sin, but if I am not bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, practically dead, the flesh will surely play me false. We want these first three elements of the armor,

and then we have not to think about ourselves. Practically in the light, as He is in the light, the heart right, I then get the shield of faith wherewith I shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. This shield supposes I can look up with entire blessed confidence in God. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.... He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day."

God is above Satan. Satan may shoot his arrows, but they cannot break through the shield of faith. In Christ the victory has been won in man and for man. Satan did his worst against Christ - first to seduce and afterward to deter Him - but he was completely overcome. All the power of Satan is broken and gone. Christ has gone through death and conquered him who had the power of death. Christ has not only put away our sins, but as a man standing for us, He has completely overcome the devil. We are not told to overcome but to "resist" the devil, and he will flee from us. If resisted, he meets Christ in us, and runs away. Human nature cannot resist; it will acquiesce. It is not a question of power on our part but of simple faithfulness and looking to Christ; it is not that we are strong, but strength is made perfect in weakness. What was ever so weak as Christ - Christ crucified through weakness? but then the weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men. Nothing could be more weak and foolish in man's eyes than the cross, but we know, nevertheless, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Whenever we are content to own ourselves weak, there is the strength that enables us to overcome. Satan is very subtle. If Satan deals with man (apart from God), it is all over with him. How is it possible that wise and learned men of this world give way to such follies as ritualism and the like? Satan, more clever than they, is behind it all and laughs to see them trusting their own wisdom. The simple soul that has his heart right cannot go wrong. Satan has no kind of power while the soul is walking in obedience that is the secret of it all. If walking inconsistently, the shield of faith will be down, and I shall be open to all the fiery darts. There should be that blessed confidence in God which reckons on Christ having completely overcome the world and the devil and that all the power of evil now in the world will soon be put down. We are to be exercised in the conflict. The Lord has said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

We have as yet no activities brought out; so far it is defensive. The defensive armor comes first. We are slow to understand this, and we often get into activities when we ought to be quiet. The shield is defensive. Satan is active. The Lord may bless and help us, in His grace, but there are many who get into activities without knowing themselves. The helmet of salvation is still defensive; we have the conscious, blessed, and full certainty of being in heavenly places in Christ - the soul

walking in the full confidence that I have Christ there, who has delivered me out of the power of the devil. Christ has fought my battle, and overcome. I can hold my head up because I have got salvation.

The blessed certainty that I am in Christ and Christ is for me is my helmet. I can now be active. Having judged the flesh, godly in walk, peaceful in my path through the world, with confidence in God, and salvation assured, I can take up the sword of the Spirit - I can fight, sheltered in the inner man, and shielded from all attacks from without. I take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We do not always look to see that it is so - that there is nothing between God and our soul so that He is practically with us in the conflict. Are we walking in the practical sense of God being with us? If there is an Achan in the camp, as there was with Israel, God will not go up. It is all-important we should be clear as to this. Paul kept under his body and brought it into subjection. If we are to be active in the service of the Lord, we must go out from the presence of the Lord according to what His presence gives. Paul said, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." Always self-judgment, always keeping close to God, then you can go out in service to others, not always, perhaps, in public ministry but in the path of everyday life.

You will have the secret of the Lord with you, the consciousness of God with you and clearness of judgment, not distracted or dismayed by half a dozen thoughts. You have the secret of the Lord, going on quietly, it may be, but going on with God. Then comes, no matter how active I may be, the inward preparation - "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." We have had the inward affection and the sword of the Spirit, but now it is entire dependence - the Word of God and prayer. These two things are found running together through Scripture: the Word of God and prayer. Mary sat at the Lord's feet and heard His word. The Lord said, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

In the next verses, the Lord teaches His disciples to pray. When deacons were chosen, the reason assigned by the apostles was that they might give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6). When there is to be service carried on against the wiles of the devil, half the battle is to be fought out in God's presence beforehand in prayer. When the prince of this world came to the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, he found Him agonizing in prayer. Peter slept while the Lord prayed; the result was that Peter denied Him, but the blessed Lord witnessed a good confession.

Nothing can, or ever will, take the place of that earnestness in prayer; if we are to have God with us, we must pray. It is marked by perfect calmness. If we have God with us, we must be with God, who is sovereign in love and goodness, and has associated us with His own interests. Does not my heart yearn after the conversion of poor sinners? do I not pray that hearts may know more of Christ? that saints may walk more faithfully? God desires this, and He has given us a path in the world associated with His interests. There is to be perseverance and supplication for all saints. If I see a soul in danger of going astray, I go with all perseverance and supplication to God about him; my heart is in it.

The very same word used of the Lord in Gethsemane is used of Epaphras who labored fervently in prayer (Col. 4). It is conflict of heart. He craves the blessing of God with all his heart - craving for it

earnestly and entering into it because it is in the interests of God in the world. This has to be carried on in opposition to Satan, who will bring all his craft and power against us. We have consequently to be with God. What a blessed thing to know that I get power and wisdom from God, grace and wisdom in practice! If I use a sword, I must get wisdom for it. What a place of blessing it would be if we were all practically with God!

For our own souls it is very helpful because prayer is the expression of entire dependence, but at the same time of confidence in God. A person like Paul, in weakness and trembling, fightings without and fears within, going about getting victories! He says to the Corinthians, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." It is always good to be conscious of weakness provided there is faith in God. Constant dependence is the constant expression of faith in God; the soul goes to God and with God's affairs; we realize how much they are our own. The blessed Lord has gone down into the dust of death. Satan's power was exercised to the fullest, but it was all broken. Christ comes up again and sits at the right hand of God, takes His people, whom He has completely delivered from the hand of Satan, and uses them for conflict against him - the instruments of His service in the world - a wondrously blessed place if we only know how to hold it -blessed to be made the Lord's host against Satan. The more you are in the forefront of the battle, the more you will be exposed to the fiery darts. The more you bear testimony to God's thoughts, God's mind, and the place the saints have in God's mind, the more you will be the object of Satan's attacks. You will necessarily be exposed to more snares and dangers than those who lag behind, and there is no place where dependence is more needed and felt.

There is more strength provided for those in the forefront to bear witness to Christ's title against Satan, and Satan will never let it pass without opposition. When I have all the armor on and come to wield the sword, I am not to be thinking of the armor but of God and His purposes, "watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Oh, how little we know of this! Suppose we pass through a day, was all that happened turned into prayer? If I am walking maintaining Christ's cause, it all turns to prayer. It is a wondrous test of the state of our souls. Do you think you can intercede much for others? Do you find earnestness in intercession for all saints? Is my heart so in the interests of Christ that I can have a lasting and continual interest for others? If my heart is in a bad state, and the presence of God is revealed to me, I think of myself - I am not free to intercede for others. "And for me," says the Apostle, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly,... as I ought to speak." How is it with us, beloved friends? It is an amazing blessing to be doing this, but we cannot if our own souls are not right - if I am not in the presence of God. As far only as I keep on this armor, I am useful; all is founded on being in a settled place before God. The blood on the doorpost, the Red Sea crossed, Jordan passed, circumcised, and the reproach of Egypt rolled away - then comes conflict in the land; all is founded on redemption.

Be assured we shall meet the wiles of Satan. Our own state and conscience are easily detected if our hearts are simple in the truth. It is not that we are to be learning Satan's wiles, but if our hearts are simple, we shall be more than a match for him. Satan is a good deal more clever than we are, and wherever redemption is not fully known, Satan plays his tricks. The moment that redemption is really believed in, all the systems of superstition so prevalent in the world are gone. You may have old things lingering, but you will never find a person under the power of superstition who has the consciousness in himself that Christ has died and suffered for him. We see wise and learned men

going away to ritualism, and the devil behind it all; but the moment redemption is really known, the devil's power is gone. The system of ritualism proceeds on the footing that Christ can have to say to man in the flesh that he is not lost and dead in his sins, and consequently a complete and accomplished redemption is denied. The moment I have my soul established in Christ, this snare of the devil will not prevail. A man may know the truth of incarnation and may speak more beautifully of the Person of the Lord than Christians may, but all the time be ignorant of redemption. I have the witness of Christ in me; I know Christ. I have received Him; He dwells in my heart so that I am not to be turned by such follies as ritualism and the like. The Lord keep us in a constant sense of dependence, in a sense of what He is, dependent on Him every moment, that we may never get out of the presence of God, for when we are out of His presence there is danger.

Change in Dispensation

"I see it now; I see it clearly," said a Christian who had long had confused views of the truth. "I see now there is a change in dispensation."

Before this, he did not clearly distinguish between the law and the gospel, Israel and the Church, things earthly and things heavenly; but now he learned from the Scriptures that there was a change in dispensation. And so there is. While God changes not, He was pleased in His sovereignty at one time to give a holy law from the burning mount, and instructed all, under penalty of death, to keep far off; and at another time to send forth His beloved Son with words of pardon and blessing to all that come to Him in faith.

God chose the former to show how great a sinner man is (Rom. 3:20); He chose the latter to show that He loved him, though a sinner, and could save him (1 Tim. 1:15).

It was once God's good pleasure to call an earthly people, the nation of Israel, to serve Him on earth; but now it is God's sovereign will to call sinners (in grace) into relationship with Himself in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

In this dispensation He is calling out of the Gentiles "a people for His name" (Acts 15:4); in the coming day He will "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth" (Eph. 1:10). The great changes between the past and present dispensations are plainly set forth in the New Testament in different points of view. Let us look at some of them.

1) AS TO SACRIFICE. In the last dispensation, there were many sacrifices, and often repeated. They were the remembrances of sins, and by virtue of them forgiveness of past sins was provided, but never "took away sins." They could not "make the corners thereunto perfect," nor enable them to "draw near" to God, as having "no more conscience of sins."

In this dispensation we have one sacrifice once offered, never needing to be repeated. Blood so precious, and so entirely taking away sins, that God says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," thus purging the conscience and enabling the worshiper to enter with boldness into the holiest of all. The change of dispensation is so marked that we are told that "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second." In the former God had no pleasure; with the latter He is well pleased. (See Heb. 10:1-22.)

PRIESTHOOD. The Apostle says, "The priesthood being changed," etc. How is it changed? The Aaronic order of priesthood was of the tribe of Levi, appointed without an oath, did not continue, passed from one person to another; the high priest was obliged to offer for his own sins, was always standing because his work was never done, and had to remember the sins of the people over again once every year.

The Lord Jesus, the High Priest now, was of the tribe of Judah, and is of the Melchisedec order, was appointed by an oath, continueth forever, and is unchangeable. He had no sins of His own to put away because He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than

the heavens"; and so perfect is His work that after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3; 7:8; 10:11, 12).

WORSHIP. In the last dispensation, Jerusalem was the place of worship; the thick veil excluded the worshipper from the presence of God, and no one could enter into the holiest of all but the high priest once a year, and that only with blood and incense. In this dispensation, worship is purely spiritual, no earthly place of worship is recognized, the veil is rent, we enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

All believers now are priests. The Father is the object of worship, Jesus the new and living way, and the Holy Spirit who now dwells in every believer, the power of worship. The Lord Jesus so marked the change in worship that He said, "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.... But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. John 4:21, 23; see also Heb. 10:19-22.

CALLING. In the last dispensation, God called a people from Egypt to Canaan, with a promise of earthly inheritance. Now God calls by His gospel with a high, holy, and heavenly calling, blessing us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, having quickened us together with Him, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Him (Eph. 1 and 2).

HOPE. The true hope of the last dispensation was Messiah the Son of David, coming to set up His kingdom on earth, and reign before His ancients gloriously. The blessed hope of this dispensation is that Christ will come, change our bodies of humiliation, and raise us up to meet Him in the air, to be forever with the Lord (John 14:3 Thess. 4:16, 17).

These are only some of the points of difference, but enough has been advanced to show that there really is a change in dispensation.

May the Lord help His children rightly to divide the word of truth, and serve Him acceptably.

Christ and the Church

The Church will have her joy in Christ, but Christ will have His greater joy in the Church. The strongest pulse of gladness that is to beat for eternity will be in the bosom of the Lord.

Christ in Glory

The heart knowing Him as He is now in glory gets filled. He is the bread that came down from heaven, that we might feed upon and abide in Him. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." We are 'to be like Him in this character. He humbled Himself, He went always down till God took Him up. Are we content to follow Him?

Looking at Him and seeing His perfectness, are we content to have all our affections filled with Christ, and no will at all? We are going to be with Him forever; and we can enjoy what He is in heaven, in the measure in which His perfect blessedness is before our hearts and has been tasted by us.

The First Thought of Christ in Resurrection

Psalm 22

Remark that the first thought of Christ when heard from the horns of the unicorn, is to declare the name of God and His Father to His brethren - now glorious, but not ashamed to call us brethren. Perfect in love, attached to these excellent of the earth, He turns, when once He is entered into the position of joy and blessing through a work which gave them the title to enter, to reveal to them what placed them in the same position with Himself. Thus He gathered them; and then having awakened their voices to the same praise as that which He was to offer, He raises the blessed note as man, and sings praise in the midst of the assembly. Oh, with what loud voices and ready hearts we ought to follow Him! And note, he who is not clear in acceptance and the joy of sonship with God, in virtue of redemption, cannot sing with Christ. He sings praises in the midst of the assembly. Who sings with Him? He who has learned the song, which he has learned to sing as come out of judgment into the full light and joy of acceptance.

Christ's Sympathy

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

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

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

But now His sword is sheathed; His arm is covered; this is the time for making known the deep love of His heart, not the power of His arm " or the sharpness of His sword.

Are you satisfied to have it so? Is Christ's sympathy enough for your heart, even amidst the heaviest sorrow and the most intense affliction? The restless heart, the impatient spirit, the unmortified will, would lead one to long to escape from the trial, the difficulty, the pressure; but this would never do. We must pass from form to form in the school. But the Master accompanies us, and the light of His countenance and the tender sympathy of His heart sustain us under the most trying circumstances.

Communion

Beloved reader, nothing can make up for the loss of communion, bear in mind. It can only be had when we are in the path of obedience, of separation from the world. If we are walking carelessly, gratifying the desires of the flesh instead of mortifying them - if we are mingled up with the world, not taking our place "outside the camp," we may gain exemption from opposition and scorn in our various circles, but we will lose communion. How bitter an exchange!

In our folly we may think that by compromising a little, by accommodating ourselves to the ways of the unconverted around us, by being a little more "like other people" (as the expression is), we will secure for ourselves a smoother path; but ah! we do not so in reality.

Ah, no! rougher far is the smooth path "toward Sodom" without conscious companionship with Christ, without the sweetness of His smile of approval. Smoother far the unsmooth path of faithfulness to an absent Lord; of testimony against the world which has rejected and crucified Him, and which "lieth in wickedness," with the capacity to enter, in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, into His thoughts.

O the unutterable joy of this fellowship! May we know it all along our desert journey; and then, it finished, we will go where there will be no possibility of aught ever marring it. What communion, what fellowship will then be ours in unhindered fullness! O hasten the time! "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Fidelity, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is what the Lord seeks for in an evil day (Rev. 3:8).

Consolation in Christ

"In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul." Psalm 94:19.

This is uttered in view of abounding iniquity which broke in pieces Jehovah's people and afflicted His heritage. The cry comes forth, How long is this to go on? Then comforting thoughts assure the heart. The Lord hears, He sees, He chastens, He corrects, He teaches man knowledge, for He knows. Happy indeed is the man whom the Lord chastens and teaches, in whom the discipline of the Word is effectual as he passes through the varied exercises in and by which he learns to have his senses exercised to discern good and evil. He learns that evil is in man, in himself, but that good is in God alone. "Thou art good, and doest good." Thus God is known and trusted as "the rock of my refuge" (v. 22).

"Shall there be evil in a city?" the prophet inquires, "and the LORD hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6). When we own this it humbles us under the mighty hand of God; yet it is in such moments that the multitude of thoughts are prone to cause a tumult within. It was so in the psalmist. Why was judgment to return to righteousness? It cannot be that the throne of iniquity has fellowship with Jehovah, and yet iniquity prevails. O Lord, how long? These questionings are hushed as the Word is applied to us. As to myself, it teaches me my own nothingness - "I said, This is my infirmity" (Psalm 77:10); then it teaches me to remember who that blessed God is whose way is in the sanctuary, and therefore according to the holiness of His own dwelling place. "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." Thus our will is subjected, and the God of patience comforts us.

"Thy comforts"! Who would not have the exercises to possess the comforts? So Paul wrote, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." 2 Cor. 1:5. As to the Corinthians also his hope was steadfast, "knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation," and this consolation comes from the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. In the epistle to the Romans also, what had been written of Christ aforetime, Paul records that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Here is the comfort, that Christ pleased not Himself, but became the subject of reproaches because of His zeal for the house of God. It is a comfort when in any measure what is of Christ fills the heart to the exclusion of our own thoughts. In His zeal for the house of God, how perfectly did He take into His own soul its state and condition. He wept and made sackcloth His garment. To have Christ's thoughts about that which belongs to God, is indeed a comfort, while fully desiring to own, according to the Spirit of Christ, our own share in that which causes its present condition - "O God, Thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from Thee." Psalm 69:5. It was grace in Him to take this place of confession of our sins; it becomes us.

It is blessed to think that we may in our measure taste the comforts which Jesus knew in the midst of sorrows; but it becomes us here to tread with reverence, for it is holy ground. See Him at the last supper. "One of you," He had to say of His loved disciples, "shall betray Me"; and has not the Lord to say to us sometimes,

"One of you," as we do this or that. Again, was it not a sorrow that He had to say, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night." There was the added sorrow also because of the self-confidence of one who protested that he would never be offended, a self-confidence which made necessary the sifting of Satan, allowed by his faithful Lord. But was there no comfort of God as He sat with them and spoke of that day when He would drink with them of a new cup in the kingdom of God, and then sang with them a hymn, a blessed anticipation of His leading their praises in the midst of the assembly. Again, as the same hour of rejection and sorrow drew on, there were anticipations given Him, testimonies of what awaited Him in coming ages. Thus He "drank of the brook in the way." At Bethany (John 12) they made Him a supper. He had entered deeply into the sorrows of death when they passed upon that family, and now they were gathering round Himself. Resurrection will indeed seat His own beyond the power of death at the table with Himself, but in order to do this He must taste death. It is at this moment that the house is filled with the savor of the devoted love of one whose affections He had won. He alone knew and could expound the value of Mary's act.

On the next day He is met by much people, who cry, "Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." It is the anticipation of His glory in the midst of His beloved Israel, while as a present thing the enemy and avenger is stilled by praise from the mouth of babes and sucklings (Matt. 21:16; Psalm 8:2). Then the Gentiles utter their desire - "We would see Jesus," and the full glory of the Son of man passes before His soul. Are there not also these anticipations for us, and they become to us God's comforts which delight our souls? Is it nothing to think of the blessed Lord being satisfied when He sees in each saint of the travail of His soul? We think of the saints as they are in the eye of the Lord, as they will be when He who has loved them and washed them will present them to Himself, when the body of each saint will be a living ray of His glory. Oh, how differently do we regard them when Christ's thoughts about them, in however feeble a measure, possess our hearts. We are then a little - but oh, how little - able to make their sorrows our sorrows, and the joys of Christ in them, become our joys. We think of the day of His joy when He will be able to have full communion with His own, while it is a present comfort that there is still an answer to the enemy and avenger, as a feeble company rehearse the praises of His whose glory is set above the heavens.

The blessed Lord in John 13 was contemplating the moment of His departure out of this world to the Father. His own were still in the world, and He loved them. He knew full well all that was present among them as well as around them; the defiling world without, the treachery within - the outcome of a heart that went out from the light of the company of Jesus into the darkness of the night without, an awful and eternal night. Then there was the ardent and self-confident Peter on the one side, and the disciple who lay on His bosom on the other. All was present to the mind of Jesus, as He washed their feet and said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.... If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." We shall find happiness if we cultivate these affections of Christ to His own. It was at the moment when He was leaving them, so that no longer would He care for them in personal presence, that He gave them the new commandment, "That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." It is as if that love, so perfect toward us in Himself, was now to be carried out by the love, His love in us, of all toward all. How the manifestation of Christ in us would thus be secured! There is no leader here, no attempt in this of one to be greater than another. It is the more excellent way, the

manifestation of Christ in each.

When the Lord was thus showing what should be our conduct during His absence, we see how easily a little self-importance can take the place of lowly listening to such an injunction. "Why cannot I follow Thee now?" said Peter, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." What I will do may thus prevent our hearing and heeding the new commandment. As we listen, so do we hear the voice of the good Shepherd. "As I have loved you" utters in our souls a tenderness of love which can only be His Voice, and as we heed it, so is it the comfort of our hearts to think of all who belong to Him with the same tenderness of love. Love cannot rejoice in iniquity, but it grieves over any that go astray, and would seek to make known the accents of the Shepherd's voice. His love is unchanging, and when we turn to the right hand or to the left He recalls us. The voice may then come from behind us, but it is His voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Only let us take care that these affections of Christ have their place in our souls. The "I am right and you are wrong" principle of either speaking or acting will find no acceptance with us then, though we shall all the more desire to discern and be assured that there is the Lord's side on which we earnestly seek to be found with our brethren. A multitude of thoughts may indeed press into our souls, but our consolation will abound by Christ.

The Cross: Sweet and Lovely

I have found His cross sweet and lovely unto me, for I have had many joyful hours and not a fearful thought since I came to prison. He has strengthened me to brave man, and face death, and I am now longing for the joyful hour of my dissolution.

Farewell, beloved sufferers and followers of the Lamb! Farewell, Christian intimates! Farewell, night-wanderings in cold and weariness for Christ! Farewell, sweet Bible, and preaching of the gospel! Farewell, sun, moon, and stars, and all sublunary things! Farewell, conflict with a body of sin and death! Welcome, scaffold for precious Christ! Welcome, heavenly Jerusalem! Welcome, innumerable company of angels! Welcome, general assembly and Church of the firstborn! Welcome, crown of glory! Above all, welcome, O Thou blessed Trinity - and one God; O eternal One, I commit my soul unto Thy eternal

rest.

The Dependent Man

Psalm 16

This psalm gives beautifully the details of the Lord's life here on this earth as the dependent Man. There are two special characteristics of the divine life in man on the earth, and these two are always dependence and obedience; and the divine life in man was, I need not say, always shown perfectly in the Lord Jesus when He walked this earth, and always with these two characteristics, dependence and obedience.

What I seek for your souls and for mine, beloved friends, is, that what was seen perfectly in Christ may be wrought in us more and more from day to day. It is very precious and profitable to turn back and see how the Lord addressed Himself to the journey through this desert scene which you and I have also to travel through. The psalm does not speak of the circumstances of the way. You and I are very apt to be occupied with the circumstances. Here you only have the perfection of God to meet every circumstance, no matter what. Each verse of the psalm has a peculiar thought in it, and the thought of the first verse is, I believe, dependence - trust.

Dependence. "Preserve Me, O God; for in Thee do I put My trust." There is no self-reliance here, but the very opposite - firm reliance on Jehovah, looking to Him to be preserved. And do you think that soul ever falls who thus puts his trust in God? Never! The soul that fears to fall, and therefore trusts God, is the soul that is preserved. When there is ever maintained in the heart this fear to fall, there is this dependence on God which keeps the heart. The keynote of this psalm is dependence. The saint of God in this scene is like a piece of ivy which has attached itself to an oak tree around which it grows. You never saw an ivy plant unsupported. Inch by inch as the ivy grows, it strikes its feelers into the oak tree whose roots are deep in the ground. It speaks most eloquently, and says this, I cannot grow a single inch without a support. This verse does not mean merely trusting the Lord for salvation at first, but is the habitual expression of the soul; and if there is this trust, if God is everything to you and to me (He was to Christ), if the soul is brought to this sweet reliance on God, what is the next step?

Subjection. Verse 2 gives the thought of subserviency - subjection. "O My soul, Thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art My Lord: My goodness extendeth not to Thee." How could this apply to Christ? You say, Was He not God? Was He not equal with the Father? Yes, He was; but that is not the way in which this psalm speaks of Him; here it is not as God, but as man in dependence on God He is speaking. He was God and He became a man; He left His first estate to glorify God, and to die for you and me. The highest perfection of the creature is to keep his first estate. The first man sought to exalt himself, and he fell; the second Man humbled Himself, and God exalted Him. Adam left his first estate and became an apostate; take care that we are not like him; take care that we do not apostatize from the truth God has given us. We are in danger of it.

If Christ has become a man, then what does He say? He said to Jehovah, "Thou art My LORD: My goodness extendeth not to Thee." It is Christ as a man on earth who thus speaks. When He takes

the place of a subject servant upon earth, He says, "My goodness extendeth not to Thee."

He is a man upon earth, servant to Jehovah. This is the reason of His answer to the young ruler in Mark 10:18, who calls Him "Good Master." If he only sees Him as a man, then, "There is none good but One, that is, God." He says to Jehovah, "My goodness extendeth not to Thee." To the saints He says, "In them is all My delight." This, therefore, leads to

Fellowship. Verse 3 is fellowship in a wonderful way. "But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all My delight. Were there some on earth in whom Jehovah delighted? With them, says Christ, is all My delight; I will go with such. In Matt. 13:13 I believe you find the historical answer to this expression of the Lord Jesus. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade Him saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness, Then he suffered Him." "Thus it becometh us!" Wondrous grace! Christ here the true Shepherd, sees the path the sheep have taken, and He says, I will go with them. He knows very well what Jehovah thinks of the action of this separated remnant in which Jehovah delighted, and He goes with them in their action. They were baptized, confessing their sins. He had no sins, I need not say, to confess; but they were taking a step morally pleasing to God, and He says, I must go with them. The same divine life in Christ which was working in the truly godly of them took Him into full association with them. With those who rightly feel what the claims of God are, and who respond to these claims, with such it is His delight to associate. He takes His place with those whose action is morally pleasing to God; He identifies Himself with them. Gracious Master! Is it not lovely? And the grace of the Master is what is to be acting in you and Me. Grace flings itself into all the exercises of heart of the saints of God, in true sympathy with them. Next comes

Fidelity, or separation to God. This we have in verse 4, that fidelity which comes out perfectly in the life of Christ. "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into My lips." The mass of the nation was practically in idolatry. He has flung Himself in with those whose actions were right toward Jehovah; but then He says, I will not go with those who have another god. He judges what is suitable to God, and only with that will He have any fellowship. The hidden springs of His soul are for God; and, beloved, we may imitate Christ in this faithfulness, this fidelity. How little do we know of it! Fidelity is like the dog who will not follow anyone but the master. What a blessed expression this fourth verse is of Christ's fidelity to God! The Lord give us to know in our souls what this practical faithfulness to God is!

The Portion. Verse five gives us the portion of the soul: "The LORD is the portion of Mine inheritance and of My cup: Thou maintainest My lot." What is your portion? His was Jehovah; ours is the Father and the Son. Three things are in the portion - the inheritance, the cup, and the lot. What have you got amid all the sorrows of this life? You have God, the living God, and He your Father. God is the portion, God Himself. We have the Lord in this verse speaking as a true priest. and there is never true worship till you get to this. Why do you say a true priest? You ask. Because He is exactly like the priest in Numb. 18:20: "And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel."

No, no inheritance. The priest says, I shall have no inheritance here. What has he got? God! Is this enough? Is this portion sufficient? It was for Christ. He says, I have a goodly heritage, I have God. Would you like to alter your circumstances? No, says the true priest. I have God. In everlasting glory you will be satisfied with God, God only, God always. Is He enough for you by the way? This true saint says, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance."

And what have you by the way? A cup. A cup is a small thing. I have a cup for the desert, an inheritance forever. The inheritance gives the idea of a permanent portion - the cup, of what you have by the way. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" You may tell me I do not know what is in your cup. True, but whose hand has raised that cup to the lips? whose hand has mixed every drop of it for you?

When the saint is in true dependence on God, he takes everything from God direct; it is not the circumstance that his heart dwells on, but God who has permitted the circumstance. Nature puts the circumstances between the heart and God; faith puts God between circumstances and the heart - has God in between itself and everything that may come. "Thou maintainest My lot," He says - not that He alters it, He maintains it. Whatever comes, Christ says, it comes from the perfect love of Him in whom I have perfect confidence. His was a pathway of sorrow from first to last, a cup brimful of sorrow from beginning to end. Outwardly the history of the Lord Jesus was a dismal one, without a true companion down here. Truly said one -

"Thy path, uncheered by earthly smiles, Led only to the cross."

He was born in one man's manger, buried in another man's tomb! betrayed by this one, denied by that one, misunderstood by all. Think of it. What a history outwardly! Did you ever know one so dismal? But what is His estimate of it?

Satisfaction. We get His estimate of it in verse 6, which speaks to us of satisfaction. "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." The pleasant places He fell into were the company of God every moment of His history down here. "I have a goodly heritage," He says. It is the soul divinely satisfied with God Himself. Is it so with us? Are we always satisfied? Is there not often something in our circumstances, in our lot, we would like to alter? Does the desert path seem dark and dreary, the way difficult? Is not He overhead? Does He not rule? Oh, to be satisfied, satisfied with God, with God Himself! "My peace I give unto you." That was the "pleasant" lines, the "goodly heritage," the peace He had in communion with God. His satisfaction and delight in God were perfect all the way along.

Worship and Counsel. Verse 7 gives us worship and counsel. "I will bless the LORD, who hath given Me counsel: My reins also instruct Me in the night seasons." It is the true priest finding His portion in Jehovah, and therefore thanking Him. We have the Lord in Matt. 11 saying when everything around looked most dreary, "I thank Thee, O Father," and, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." And again, in John 11:41, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always." Again, In Isa. 50 we have Him saying, "The Lord GOD hath given Me the tongue of the learned [the instructed], that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned [the instructed]. The Lord GOD hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." vv. 4, 5. If you have the Lord always before your heart, there will be this

blessed worshipful spirit maintained, and then He will counsel you, too. You get it in Psalm 73 as well - "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel."

Again, in Psalm 32:8 we have the Lord saying, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go." That is, He says, I have a way for you to go along this dark scene, and I will counsel you in that way. In a desert place, where self-will has come in, and where we are certain to go wrong unless in dependence on God, God says, There is a way, My way for you, and I will counsel you in it. "My reins also instruct thee in the night seasons." What is that? Well, I believe there is a sense of what suits the Lord; there are the instincts of the divine life of the Christian; God by His Spirit working and giving the believer on earth the sense of what suits Him. "He that is spiritual judgeth [discerneth] all things" (1 Cor. 2:15).

Devotedness and Confidence. Verse 8 shows us devotedness. "I have set the LORD always before Me: because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved." If we wrote our own path what would we say? I have set the Lord sometimes before me, and the sometimes fewer than the other times. Sometimes we set each other before us; oftener we set ourselves. He says, "I have set the LORD always before Me." He has nothing before His mind but the Lord, Jehovah. There was His devotedness. "Lo, I come to do Thy will," He says; and again, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34). And there is confidence. "Because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved." Think of this. And does not God delight to put Himself at the right hand of the soul that simply trusts in Him? God says, If you put Me always before you, I shall bring Myself very near; I will put Myself at your right hand. If you set Me always before you, I will bring Myself as near as I can. What does God put Himself at your right hand for? That you may put your right hand into His right hand, and be upheld by Him. "Thy right hand hath holden me up" (Psalm 18:35). "Thou hast holden me by my right hand" (Psalm 73:23).

What can God only do to the man who sets Jehovah at His right hand? Jehovah's answer to the dependent Man is this: "Sit Thou at My right hand." You have Him putting Jehovah at His right hand down here; that gives confidence; and to the Man who says, "I have set the Loan always before Me," Jehovah answers, I will set that Man at My right hand in glory. The thought of the right hand coming in here brings out the end of the pathway of the blessed Lord Jesus. How does He reach that glory? Through death; and thus we get the lovely connection of Psalm 110 with Psalm 16 in Peter's sermon of Acts 2:25-36.

Joy. Now we have verse 6 which gives us joy in view of all that was before Him. "Therefore My heart is glad, and My glory rejoiceth: My flesh also shall rest in hope." "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb. 12:2.

Assurance. In verse 10 we have the assurance in view of death. "For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." The Holy One is that which He was intrinsically and practically. He can go even into death in full assurance, and so can the believer also. Christ, of course, saw no corruption. 1 Cor. 15 gives the other side for the believer. "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption." He was so holy that if He got into death as the end of a pathway of grace and obedience, the only thing God could possibly do was to take Him out of death and set Him in glory.

Association with God in glory. Verse 11 gives us the close of the pathway. "Thou wilt show Me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." It is God Himself who is the fullness of His joy. Pleasures in what way? Well, I think in association with Him. He has had God down here; and when at His right hand, there are eternal associations with Him there.

This psalm gives to us in a blessed way the divine life coming out in a man down here on this earth. First dependence, then thorough subservience or subjection, then fellowship, fidelity, God the portion of the soul, satisfaction; then worship and counsel, devotedness and confidence, joy, assurance in view of death, and finally association with God in glory.

The Lord keep us walking more in the footprints of the blessed Master, for His own name and glory's sake.

An Eternal Weight of Glory

God does not take us out of our circumstances; He will not do that till Christ comes, or till we go to be with Him. But He furnishes us with power to go through them, and to be "more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:37). He imparts life, and the Holy Spirit as the energetic power to carry us through everything, to detach us from earth by setting the glory before us, and putting in our hearts "the hope of glory."

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

Fellowship in Rejection

My heart has perfect repose in the thought of being rejected. I only trust I shall always be able to bear it in meekness; neither in disdain turning from and scorning those who act thus, nor in self-vindication retaliating, but accepting all simply as that plan in which we are to have fellowship with Jesus, who was so misunderstood, and whose principles were so little appreciated, even by His apostles and brethren.

It is so valuable a school to learn in; the one in which the more you love the less you are loved, and still not be faint and weary, At times my heart is very sick at the aspect of things; such divisions, such jealousies, such evil surmisings; but then, I think, thus it was with the Lord. If I am called a teacher of blasphemy, so was He; if I am called a Sabbath breaker, so was He; if my authority to teach is questioned, so was His; if He was neglected by His own people, so are we.

The Garden of the Lord: Song of Solomon

"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

Thy shoots are a paradise of pomegranates, with precious fruits;

Henna with spikenard plants;

Spikenard and saffron;

Calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense;

Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: A fountain in the gardens,

A well of living waters,

Which stream from Lebanon.

Awake, north wind, and come, thou south;

Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow forth.

Let my beloved come into his garden,

And eat its precious fruits.

I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;

I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk.

Eat, O friends; drink, yea,, drink abundantly,

beloved ones! Song of Songs 4:12-5:1; J.N.D.

With these choice words from the Song of Songs, the bridegroom likens his bride to a garden of delights. Probably, all believers with hearts opened to understand the Scriptures, would agree that in the bridegroom, or the "beloved" of the Song of Songs, we have a beautiful figure of Christ. Most would also concede that, in the interpretation of the Song, the bride sets forth Christ's earthly people.

While, however, the strict interpretation of the bride has Christ's earthly people in view, we are surely warranted in making an application to the Church, the heavenly bride of Christ.

Furthermore, if we may discover in this garden the excellencies that Christ would find in His heavenly bride, do we not at the same time learn what the love of Christ is looking for in the hearts of those who compose the bride? May we then for a little meditate upon this garden, with its spring, its fruit, its spices, and its living waters, as describing what the Lord would have our hearts to do for Himself.

First, we notice that the bridegroom always speaks of the garden as "my garden," while the bride delights to own it as "his garden." "Awake, north wind... blow upon my garden," says the bridegroom. The bride replies, "Let my beloved come into his garden." In response, the bridegroom says, "I am come into my garden." The application is plain - the Lord claims our hearts for Himself. "My son, give me thine heart," says the preacher (Pro. 23:26). "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," is the exhortation of an apostle (1 Pet. 3:15); and again, another apostle can pray that "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3:17).

It is not simply our time, our means, our brains, and our busy service, that the Lord desires, but first, and above all, He claims our affections. We may give all our goods to the poor, and our bodies to be burned, but without love it will profit nothing. The Lord is still saying to us, "Give Me thine heart."

"That thou hast left thy first love," was a solemn word indicating that whatever excellencies belonged to the believers thus addressed, their hearts had ceased to be a garden for the Lord. As one has said, "A wife may take care of the house, and fulfill all her duties so as to leave nothing undone for which her husband could find fault; but if her love for him has diminished, will all her service satisfy him if his love to her be the same as at first?" (J.N.D.).

Above all then the Lord claims the undivided affection of our hearts. The garden must be His garden. Moreover, if the Lord claims our hearts to be a garden for His delight, they must have the marks of the garden that is according to His mind.

As we read this beautiful description of the garden of the Lord, we note five outstanding features which set forth in figure what the Lord would have our hearts to be for Himself. First, the garden of the Lord is an enclosed garden. Second, it is a watered garden, with its spring shut up and its fountain sealed. Third, it is a fruitful garden - a paradise of pomegranates with precious fruits. Fourth, it is a fragrant garden, with trees of frankincense, and all the

chief spices. Last, it is a refreshing garden from

whence the "living waters" flow, and the fragrance of its spices is carried to the world around.

The garden enclosed. If the heart is to be kept as a garden for the pleasure of the Lord, it must be as "a garden enclosed." This speaks of a heart separate from the world, preserved from evil, and set apart for the Lord.

May we not say that, in the Lord's last prayer, we learn the desire of His heart that His people should be as "a garden enclosed"? We hear Him tell the Father that His own are a separate people, for He can say, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Again, He desires that they may be a preserved people, for He prays, "Keep them from the evil." Above all, He prays that they may be a sanctified people, for He says, "Sanctify them through Thy truth." (John 17:14-17.)

Does not the preacher exhort us to keep our hearts as "a garden enclosed," when he says, "Keep thy heart more than anything that is guarded"? (Pro. 4:23; J.N.D. Trans.). Again, we do well to heed the Lord's own words, "Let your loins be girded about." Unless the girdle of truth holds in our affections and thoughts, how quickly our minds will be drawn away by the things of the world, and the heart cease to be "a garden enclosed."

Again, the Apostle James desires that our hearts may be preserved from evil, when he warns us, "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.... For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." Jas. 3:14-16. Never has there been a scene of confusion and strife among the people of God that has not had its hidden root of envy and strife in the heart. We may be sure that the heart that entertains bitterness, envying, and strife, will be no garden for the Lord.

How necessary then to have our hearts kept in separation from the world, and preserved from evil. Nevertheless, the refusal of the world and the flesh will not be enough to constitute our hearts "a garden enclosed." The Lord desires that our hearts may be sanctified, or set apart, for His pleasure, by being occupied with the truth of all that is according to Christ. Does not the Apostle Paul set before the Philippians "a garden enclosed" - a heart sanctified for the Lord - when he says, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever

things are amiable, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if any praise, think on these things"? Phil. 4:8; J.N.D. Trans.

If the heart is full of cares, fretting over wrongs, and full of bitterness toward those who have acted badly toward us; if we are entertaining evil imaginations, malicious thoughts, and revengeful feelings toward a brother, it is very certain our hearts will be no garden for the Lord.

If then we would have our hearts freed from things that defile and turn the heart into a barren waste, choking the garden with weeds, let us follow the instruction of the Apostle when he tells us, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Having, like Hannah of old, poured out our hearts before the Lord, and unburdened our minds of all our cares, the sorrows, and the trials that pressed upon our spirits, we shall find that "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Thus set free from all that might come in between the soul and God, our hearts will be at liberty to enjoy the things of Christ, and our minds free to "think on these things" - these holy and pure things which should mark one whose heart is "a garden enclosed."

A Watered garden. The heart that is set apart for the Lord will have its hidden source of refreshment and joy. It will be a garden with "a spring shut up" and "a fountain sealed." A spring is an unfailing supply; a fountain rises up to its source. The prophet can say of one who walks according to the mind of the Lord, that his soul shall be "like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (Isa. 58:11). To the woman of Sychar the Lord spoke of giving "a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14; J.N.D. Trans.), to be in the believer. The world is entirely dependent upon surrounding circumstances for its passing joy; the believer has a spring of joy within - the hidden life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As the spring of life the Holy Spirit meets all our spiritual needs by guiding us into "all truth"; as the fountain of life He engages our hearts with Christ above. The Lord can say, "The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me" - Christ in His new place in the glory. Thus as the spring He refreshes our souls with the truth; as the fountain springing up to its source He engages our hearts with Christ.

Let us, however, remember that the spring, which is the source of blessing, is "a spring shut up," and the fountain is "a fountain sealed." Does this not remind us that the source of blessing in the believer is sealed to this world, and wholly apart from the flesh? The Lord speaks of the Comforter as One that "the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John 14:17. Again we read, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. 5:17).

Alas! we may mind the things of the flesh, and turn aside to the world, only to find we grieve the Spirit so that our hearts, instead of being as a watered garden, become but a dry and barren waste.

A fruitful garden. The "spring" and the "fountain" will turn the garden of the Lord into a fruitful garden - "a paradise of pomegranates, with precious fruits." The ungrieved Spirit will produce in our hearts "the fruit of the Spirit" which, the Apostle tells us, "is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness [kindness], goodness, faith [fidelity], meekness," and "temperance [self-control]" (Gal. 5:22). What, indeed, are these precious fruits of the Spirit but the reproduction of the character of Christ in the believer? The fountain, rising up to its source, occupies with Christ and His excellencies; and, beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. Thus the heart becomes a garden of the Lord bearing precious fruit for the delight of His heart.

A fragrant garden. Not only is the garden of the Lord a garden of precious fruits, but a garden of spices from which sweet odors arise. In Scripture, fruit speaks of the excellencies of Christ; but the spices, with their fragrance, speak of worship that has Christ for its Object. In worship there is no thought of receiving blessing from Christ, but of bringing the homage of our hearts to Christ. When the wise men from the east found themselves in the presence of the young child, they "fell down, and worshipped Him," and "presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh" (Matt. 2:11). When Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with "a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly," she was not, as on other occasions, at His feet as a receiver to get instruction, or find sympathy in her sorrow; she was there as a giver to render the worship of a heart filled with a sense of His blessedness. It was good to be at His feet to hear His word, and again, to be at His feet to receive comfort in sorrow; but in neither case do we read of the ointment with its odor. But when she is at His feet as a worshiper, with her precious ointment, we read, "the house was filled with the odor of the ointment" (John 12:1-3).

The Philippian saints in their gift to the Apostle, may indeed have shown forth some of the excellencies of Christ - His comfort of love and compassion - and thus brought forth fruit that would abound to their account; but there was in their gift the spirit of sacrifice and worship which was as "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God" (Phil. 2:1; 4:17, 18).

In our day, if our hearts are to be a garden of the Lord, let us not forget that the Lord not only looks for the precious fruits of the Spirit, reproducing in us something of His lovely traits, but also the spirit of worship that rises up to Him as a sweet odor.

A refreshing garden. Last, the Lord would have His garden to be a source of refreshment to the world around - a garden from whence there flow the "living waters." Thus the Lord can speak of

the believer, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, as being a source of blessing to a needy world, as He says, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38, 39).

Thus we learn from the Song of Songs that the Lord would fain possess our hearts as a garden of delights for Himself. He stands at the door of our hearts and knocks, for He desires to come in and dwell within our hearts. If we are slow to let Him in, He may say, as the bridegroom in the Song, "Awake, north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow forth." He may allow adverse circumstances, trials, and sorrows, in order to drive us to Himself, so that we may say like the bride, "Let my beloved come into his garden."

If we open to Him we shall experience the truth of His own words, "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Rev. 3:20. In like spirit, when the bride says, "Let my beloved come into his garden," the bridegroom at once responds, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey."

If then the heart of the believer be kept separate from the world, preserved from evil, and set apart for the Lord, it will become like "a garden enclosed."

In that garden there will be found a spring of secret joy and refreshment that, like a fountain, rises to its source.

The fountain, springing up to its source, will bring forth precious fruit, the excellencies of Christ.

The fruit that speaks of the moral traits of Christ in the heart of the believer, will lead to worship that rises up as a sweet odor to the heart of Christ.

The heart that goes out in worship to Christ, will become a source of blessing to the world around.

In the light of these scriptures we may well pray the prayer of the Apostle when He bows his knees to the Father, and asks, "That He would grant you; according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." (Eph. 3:14-17.)

The Glory of That Light

Sir Isaac Newton, anxious to solve a certain optical problem, gazed intently at the sun in its noonday splendor. When he had finished his observations, he returned home, only to see the sun wherever he looked.

When Saul of Tarsus was traveling the Damascus road, he saw a light above the brightness of the sun (Acts 26:13), and he could not see for the glory of that light (Acts 22:11). He saw, moreover, the LORD of glory, and He ever afterward filled his vision

God Promising to Answer Prayer

The promises do not refer to prayers offered up one for another only, though this is a large part of the cases put forward in Scripture - "pray one for another"; "for me also"; "laboring earnestly for you in prayers"; and many others. But the prayer of faith is not confined to this. There are prayers for opening the door for the gospel, and for all men. We are told in all things to present our requests to God; but then the answer is, or may be only, that "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

For the prayer of faith, or the promise to it, there are certain limits as to the certainty of answer, such as "in My name," "according to His will," "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will"; "If two of you agree"; besides what stops prayer, as "a sin unto death." But then I see no limits put to the expectation of faith, if God gives it. If it be my will, asking amiss to consume it on my lusts, I cannot expect an answer. But the Lord contemplates the giving of faith, and certainty of answer for drying up of the fig tree or removing a mountain; and whatever I can ask believing, I receive it. This is a very important principle. But first, the limits on which formal promise of answer rests, besides special faith.

The first passage I may refer to is, "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us... and... we know that we have the petitions." This supposes the demand according to His will, and then we can reckon on His power accomplishing it. This is the general Christian confidence, a great boon to be assured of the acting of Him who is almighty in the way of His will.

Next it is said, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will." Here I do not doubt there was special reference to the twelve, but in principle it applies to all Christians. Where the mind is formed by the words of Christ, when they abide in one who lives in dependence on and confidence in Him - one thus abiding in Him, having Him in spirit, and his mind guided by Christ's word, his will is (so to speak) Christ's - he asks what he will, and it will come.

Another case is where any two are agreed; here individual will is set aside. It is where Christians have a common desire, and agree to present it to God. The deliberate formal agreement supposes a common Christian mind, and it will be done. So when I ask, coming for what I can attach Christ's name to, under His authority, the Father will do it. Here, I doubt not too, the twelve are specially in view; still it is in principle every Christian.

A man cannot in faith bring Christ's name attached to his lusts; and all these statements suppose the disciple and faith, as James expressly teaches us, and indeed the Lord Himself. But there are other statements which cast us more generally on the goodness of God and His interest in us, and show us that where faith is in exercise, the answer will be there. "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." This supposes faith, and intimacy, so to speak, with God. The heart is supposed to be in His interests, and then if there is faith as a grain of mustard seed, a mountain goes.

I do not doubt this kind of faith was much more when any, as the apostles, felt themselves interested in God's cause, identified with Him and it on the earth; but there is no limit to it. Where such faith is, such answer will be; and God is as much occupied now with the details of blessing for us, as for the great deeds of those days.

Not a sparrow falls now without Him any more than then; and the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availing much is ever true; only one must, so to speak, put ourselves with God, for those to whom these things were said were identified with Him in His interests on the earth. This gave their prayers of course a peculiar place; but then if faith (that is, the operation of His Spirit and grace) brings me into His interests now even in details, the promise is there, and we can reckon on God and His power exercised in love now as then. There is no limit; only it is the working of His Spirit in us, and hence faith that reckons on the answer.

Presenting our requests, subject to His will, is always right; of this we can have an example even in Gethsemane; so Paul for his thorn in the flesh. And the answer will be more glorious and blessed than the request, even when it does not answer it as we may have anticipated. See John 12 and Psalm 32. So Psalm 21, and even Paul's request about the thorn.

Let us trust His love, and this will not come short; and if He has given us faith to expect a specific answer, bless God for it. Only our will must not come in, even if it were answered (this was the case of the quails), but as a rule not, as James teaches. But where there is earnest faith, God will surely hear, though He may give us safeguards against our own will in it.

Godliness With Contentment Is Great Gain

What is godliness? "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16).

True godliness is God-likeness as in the above portion, and in Eph. 5:1 linked up with Eph. 4:32. Christians are to be followers (literally imitators) of God - be God-like or godly, ever giving ourselves up to God for others, as Christ did on the cross - of course excepting what only Christ could do - making atonement. But our godliness, our walking in love, is to have no lower standard than this. The Holy Spirit too in the first epistle of John teaches the same standards as to us Christians loving one another in chapter 4:16. Then godliness with contentment is great gain. (1 Tim. 6:6-8.)

Godliness not only has "promise of the life that now is," but also "of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8), and both are "gain." So godliness with contentment is great gain. Where there is not this "contentment," the heart is not satisfied - not resting in the joy of communion with the Father and the Son.

Satan knows this well and tries to rob us of this joy by stirring up covetousness. So we are exhorted in Heb. 13:5, "Let your conversation {conduct as a Christian} be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And again, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." (1 Tim. 6:7-10.)

But what am I to be content with? Food and clothing. Hear too what our Lord teaches as to this in Luke 12, and what are we to consider? We are to consider the ravens, and the lilies, and how He feeds the one and clothes the other (vv. 22-30).

What is covetousness? In Scripture there are different words in the Greek, all translated by the same English word "covet" or "covetousness."

Five Greek words for "covet" and "covetousness" are found in the New Testament. In only two scriptures (1 Cor. 12:31 and 1 Cor. 14:39) is the word used in a good sense, and here only the word "zeloo" (to be zealous for) is used. By far the commonest word is "pleonexia," meaning "the greed for more," or "greed for gain."

Of the other three words "philargurus" or "love of silver" is found in Luke 16:14, Heb. 13:5, and 2 Tim. 3:2. In 1 Tim. 6:10 it is translated "love of money." "Epithumeo" or "fixing the mind on" is used in Acts 20:33, Rom. 7:7 and 13:9. In 1 Tim. 6:10 it is "oregomai" or "extending the arms for."

In Luke 12:15-20 it is "greediness -for gain." And in 1 Cor. 5 we are told to put away, not only a fornicator, or drunkard, or railer, as a wicked person, but one greedy for gain, a covetous person. Does not all this show how hateful greediness for gain is to God? It is idolatry (Col. 3:5). How 'it `fobs God of His proper place!

And how it robs the soul of the great gain of godliness with contentment, and the joy of the Father acting a father's part to those who are separate from any unequal yoke with unbelievers! Some lines come before me that illustrate the above, and I pass them on to the reader:

A Heart for Christ

Mary, with her alabaster box, stands forth in bright and beautiful contrast with all. While the chief priest, elders and scribes were plotting against Christ, "in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas," she was anointing His body "in the house of Simon the leper." While Judas was covenanting with the chief priests to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, she was pouring the precious contents of her alabaster box upon His Person. Touching contrast! She was wholly absorbed with her object, and her object was Christ. Those who knew not His worth and beauty might pronounce her sacrifice a waste. Those who could sell Him for thirty pieces of silver might talk of "giving to the poor"; but she heeded them not. Their surmisings and murmurings were nothing to her. She had found her all in Christ. They might murmur, but she could worship and adore. Jesus was more to her than all the poor in the world. She felt that nothing was "waste" that was spent on Him. He might only be worth thirty pieces of silver to one who had a heart for money. He was worth ten thousand worlds to her, because she had a heart for Christ.

Happy woman! May we imitate thee! May we ever find our place at the feet of Jesus, loving, adoring, admiring and worshipping His blessed Person. May we spend and be spent in His service, even though heartless professors should deem our service a foolish "waste." The time is rapidly approaching when we shall not repent of anything done for His name's sake; yea, if there could be room for a single regret, it will be that we so faintly and feebly served His cause in the world. If, on "the morning without clouds," a single blush could mantle the cheek, it will be that we did not, when down here, dedicate ourselves more undividedly to His service.

Reader, let us ponder these things. And may the Lord grant us A HEART FOR CHRIST.

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NOTE - There is something perfectly beautiful in the way in which the Lord vindicates the act of the woman. "When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Nothing can exceed the grace that shines in these most precious words. "This gospel," which reveals Christ for the heart, is here linked with an act which reveals a heart for Christ, and sent forth to the whole world, to be heard by countless millions. The Lord be praised!

Heavenly Tidings

Why could Paul say, "Be ye followers of me"? He was a man of like passions with us. We can only understand it by remembering that the point here is not a state attained to, but the object before the soul; Christ was always Paul's Object. Hence he could say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." 1 Cor. 11:1.

It is a cheer to our hearts that we have before us not only the Author and Finisher of faith, but one running after Him, and who tells us to do the same.

If we are occupied with the path, we never shall present the likeness of Christ that we see here; nothing but occupation with Christ will produce this. Paul was not occupied with the path, or with anything to which he had attained. The object was everything to him. When referring to his path, he lays it all aside and looks on to eternal and unseen things.

Christians may go on, nothing outwardly to be found fault with, all fair outside, and yet they may be among those who "mind earthly things." We must have an object of some kind; if Christ is not our object, earthly things are. They may not be wrong things; and how foolish it is for us, when we come to think of it, to mind earthly things!

It may be tomorrow, it may be today, that the Lord will call our spirits to Himself, or He may come and change our bodies like to His body of glory, and earthly things will be over forever. There will be a complete transfer of interest then; but we need not be exiles from our true Home now; our spirits need not be prisoners here.

If attainment were the point, one could not dare to speak of this subject, but it is a cheer to our hearts to know that the point is not attainment, but what is our object? May we say, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:13, 14.

"Looking steadfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith" (Heb. 12:2; J.N.D. Trans.).

Hebrews 1

In Heb. 1, I see the Son of God seated at God's right hand as the One who accomplished the work to put away sins, and settled it forever. Once I did not see this, nor feel the solemnity of the subject; now I see how I was robbing Christ of His glory. Suppose you say that you lack full peace. Do you mean to call in question what God's eternal Son did when He made peace and sat down at God's right hand?

The martyrdom of Stephen gives the golden key that opens this epistle to the Hebrew Christians. Christ is presented by God as a Man in heaven, the answer to everything for man. This epistle does not treat of oneness of life with Christ, but the curtain is unrolled between us and heaven, showing that there is nothing between Christ and us, as there is nothing between Christ and God.

His Life in Me

Is it a fact that Christ is my life? not merely that something in Him is given me, and certain blessings are mine; but something that keeps my heart occupied with Him as the Object of worship and adoration. That something is His life in me here as a real thing. He, the Rock, the Fountain - the soul never should forget that all its springs are in Him.

Homeward Bound

He who "removeth kings, and setteth up kings" (Dan. 2:21), also controls the destinies of democracies, allowing the winds of public opinion to blow one way or another, to the end that what He has determined shall be done.

Our acquaintance beforehand with the final result of the world's politics, our being fully persuaded that our Father's will is being done

now, and the conscious, knowledge of our portion

in a better sphere, should keep us tranquil and composed no matter what happens in this or any other country. We who have been informed of "things not seen as yet" should not only be submissive to the will of God in such matters, but really have no will of our own whatever, no more than an angel would have who was sent from heaven into the world on a certain mission. But Christians are constantly in danger of forgetting that they are not of this world, even as He is not of it.

When the Lord Jesus was here, politics were bad, but He did not lift a finger or utter a word to change them; when the Apostle Paul labored here, they were still worse, but not once did he express a wish to change things, or give instructions to Christians to help do so, or even to pray for it. In the days of the ruthless and capricious tyrant Nero, Paul wrote of the emperor's agents that they were the ministers of God for good (Rom. 13:4). We are exhorted to "fear God, and honor the king," to "obey magistrates" and the "powers that be," while we pass through this world. And while doing so we can sing:

"We are but strangers here,

Heaven is our home."

In the Everlasting Arms

As a child when wearied with play nestles in the mother's arms, and without one lingering fear of danger, sweetly sleeps, so does the weary believer when called to die nestle in fearless confidence in the Everlasting Arms. What mother-love is to the confiding child, the all embracing love of the Infinite One is to the dying Christian whose faith recognizes the everlasting Father in the gracious Face of the glorified Jesus. It was because Stephen's eye rested on that divine Face, while he lay bleeding on the rough bed of martyrdom, that inspiration did not say he died, but that he "fell asleep." O beautiful conception of death! Going into a soft, sweet sleep, which ends the sorrow and toils of earth, and is followed by a waking amidst the music, the bliss, the glory of heaven, and a beholding the beauty and love of God in the face of Him who is altogether lovely, the Son of Man, the Son of God - this is death.

Israel in the Light of Prophecy

A most remarkable prophetic description of the state of the children of Israel during the past approximately 1900 years is found in Hos. 3:4: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim." Since the day of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A. D., they have been in this condition with nothing outwardly to bind them together; yet they have remained a separate and distinct people with characteristic Jewish hopes and aspirations.

They have had neither king nor prince; that is, neither a duly anointed king, nor a ruler that might be described by the word "prince." Thus all Jewish civil polity was gone. And all religious or sacred institutions were likewise missing, for they have had neither sacrifice nor priesthood, which is represented by the "ephod" - a part of priestly attire. Their temple was destroyed and all their sacrifices came to an end; neither have they genealogies to prove the right to priesthood by any.

Another remarkable point in this prophecy is that they were to remain without "teraphim" which was used in worship of idols (see Judg. 17). Before the Babylonian captivity they had been idolaters, but after the remnant returned in Ezra's and Nehemiah's days, they did not go back into idolatry, and have not to this day. The fact is also referred to by the Lord Jesus in Matt. 12:43 as the unclean spirit (of idolatry)

having gone out of the man (Israel). But, alas, He said it will yet return in a more depraved and diabolical form.

Could any man looking back over the past 2,000 years write a clearer, more concise history of that people than the Spirit of God gave prophetically almost 3,000 years ago?

But what are we to think now that we see Israel as a nation once more in their land? They still have no temple, no sacrifice, and no priesthood; they still do not possess Jerusalem, but they again have a civil government and a duly elected "president." They went to Jerusalem to inaugurate their president to indicate their claim to that city (and then retired to Tel Aviv), and they have plans to restore their "past glories." The celebration at their opening ceremony included the blowing with the rams' horns which were used so prominently in their first entrance into the Land of Canaan at the conquest of Jericho (Josh. 6); and their new money system is to be based on the familiar "shekels" and "gerahs." Clearly they intend to restore Israel as in days of old. But has the time come for the fulfillment of the next verse in Hos. 3? - "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days." No, not yet. The fifth verse will be fulfilled just as surely as the fourth has been for approximately 1900 years, but something else must precede the seeking of Jehovah their God.

Other scriptures let us know that they will go back to their land in unbelief; will be backed by the revived Roman Empire; will build a temple and re-establish a form of religious observance;

will accept as their king one of their number who will claim to be the long-promised Messiah, but will be in reality the "false prophet" and "antichrist." This false king will betray them, and will be in league with the Roman Empire's wicked head who will stop the sacrifice and enforce open and glaring idolatry (Dan. 9:27; 11:36-39). Then our Lord's words as to the return of the unclean spirit will be fulfilled (Matt. 12:45). All this is to precede the coming of the Son of man to execute judgment and reign, and the return of the remnant to "Jehovah their God, and David their king" (or the Messiah).

But the events that have already taken place in Palestine are of startling significance and should not be forgotten as just a piece of yesterday's news. Clearly, the "many days" of Hos. 3:4 are about up; they have about run their allotted course. Israel is already in the land, with a recognized government, and are re-establishing the old traditions and customs. Soon they will be talking about a temple, and acting too. And while they will not get complete control of the city of Jerusalem until the Lord gives it to them, they will receive some rights there and have a temple. There are some things that we cannot speak so definitely about, but where Scripture speaks, so can we.

But, Christians, are we all aware of this great change that has taken place? And do we understand its significance? Has it laid hold of our being that we are at the very end of this age? The Lord rebuked the Jews of His day with this remark: "How is it that ye do not discern this time?" Luke 12:56. They should have known from the Scriptures what time it was when He was here; and should we fail to see the signs of the running out of the "many days" of Israel's dispersion? Well might the poet say:

"Those gloomy years have rolled away, The years of Israel's mourning."

Just ahead now is the time of their greatest idolatry and wickedness, and terrible judgments; then an elect remnant of them will return and "seek Jehovah their God, and David their king."

We are not told that we should see all that has now taken place before the coming of the Lord for us, but there it is, unfolded before our eyes. Soon, very soon, the Morning Star will appear! "Let us watch and be sober." 1 Thess. 5:6.

Jesus Girded

(John 13:1-10)

The attitude in which our blessed Lord Jesus appears in this scripture is one of infinite grace. We behold him furnished with a basin, girded with a towel, and stooping down to wash and wipe His disciples' feet. Yes; Jesus, the Son of God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, is here seen laying His holy hands upon the defiled feet of His followers, in order to wash away every soil which, even unknown to themselves, they might have contracted. The dignity and glory of the Person magnify the grace of the act.

There could be nothing higher than the place from which Christ had come; and there could be nothing on earth lower than the defiled feet of a sinner: but such is the glory of Christ's Person that He fills up all the space between. He can lay one hand on the throne of God, and the other on the feet of His saints, and form, in Himself, the mysterious precious link between the two.

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded."

Observe this. Jesus, knowing that all things were in His hands - knowing whence He had come and whither He was going, enters upon the deeply significant work of washing His disciples' feet. What marvelous grace! What full provision is here! How true it is that Jesus meets us, at every stage of our spiritual history, with the very thing we need. He meets us at the first, when bowed down beneath the crushing load of guilt, and, by His precious blood, removes the load and casts it into the mighty waters of divine forgetfulness. He meets us day by day, as we pass along through a defiling scene, and with the basin and towel removes the defilement which we unavoidably contract, so that we may ever appear before God "clean every whit," and tread the courts of the sanctuary with feet as clean as Jesus can make them. He cleanses our conscience by His blood, and He cleanses our ways by His word.

This gives immense relief to the heart. Jesus has made us clean; and Jesus keeps us clean. There is not a soil on the conscience, not a soil on the feet of the very weakest member of the household of faith. Both the one and the other are cleansed according to the lofty demands of the sanctuary. All that God saw on my conscience has been washed away by the blood; and all that He sees in my ways is washed away by the Word, so that I am "clean every whit." This is what Christ declares; it is founded upon His perfect work; and it maintains the heart in unruffled repose.

The action of the basin and the towel never ceases for one moment. As we pass from the bath to the robing-room - from the fountain where our sins were washed away to the place where we shall put on our robes of immortality, our feet necessarily contract defilement; and if we did not know upon divine authority, that all that defilement was removed by a divine action continually going on, what should we do? We should either be in a most wretched state of soul, fearing all was not right,

or else we should have a very low apprehension of the holiness of our position and path. But when, by the eye of faith, we see Jesus girded - when we gaze upon that mysterious basin - when, in the light of divine revelation, we interpret the whole mystic scene in John 13:1-10, then, while we have the most elevated view of the purity of that position in which the blood of Jesus has set us, our hearts enjoy profound peace, because we know that the One who was nailed to the cross to bring us there into, is girded for the gracious purpose of keeping us therein.

Nor need we, for one moment, question the full application of all this to our own souls, for as surely as Christ washed the feet of those who sat around Him at the last supper, so surely is He washing our feet; yes, and He will continue to wash the feet of His saints until we all stand upon the golden pavement of the upper sanctuary.

"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Yes, right through and through to the very end of time, through all the changes of this ever changing scene, His love endures. The love of Jesus is not a love for a day, a month, or a year; it is a love for eternity. What He did over eighteen hundred years ago, He is doing now, and He will continue to do until we shall no longer need to have it done. Then "He will gird Himself, and come forth and serve us" in the glory of the kingdom. We are bound to Him forever, not only by our deep necessities, but by the powerful attractions of His Person.

Yes, my beloved Christian reader, you are as surely included in the mystic action of John 13, as you are in the powerful intercession of John 17. Of the latter, you are assured by His own words of thoughtful, tender love, when He said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word"; and of the former you are assured by the comprehensive expression, "His own... unto the end."

Wherefore remember, for the abiding peace and consolation of your heart, Jesus is ever washing your feet. He has washed you already, so that you need not be washed over again; but your feet, your ways need to be cleansed, and that He is doing for you, without any interruption, morning, noon, eventide, and midnight. He is always doing it, because you always need it to be done. It is not merely when you have committed some sin of which your conscience takes cognizance, but at all times your feet need to be washed, and this Jesus is doing for you, else, you would have no part in Him.

Peter, like many in our day, did not quite understand the meaning or object of Christ's gracious act. He evidently thought it demeaning for His blessed Master to perform such an office; whereas it was but a beautiful out-shining of His moral glory. In one sense, the mount of transfiguration itself had not yielded a brighter testimony to the glory of Christ, than that afforded by the basin and towel in John 13.

But the ardent Peter did not apprehend this, and hence he refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet; and when told of the terrible consequences of such a refusal, he said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." This, as we

blood of Jesus can make him - "clean every whit"; and, as a consequence, he does not need to come again and again and be washed. "The worshippers once purged, should have no more conscience of sins." (Heb. 12.) The idea of repeated washing would lower the blood of Christ

to the level of "the blood of bulls and goats."

To be washed in the blood of Jesus is to be rendered perfectly and eternally clean - clean enough for God. What more is needed? Jesus replies, nothing more, "save to wash his feet." And what makes this needful? Because the believer is, in himself, a poor, feeble, failing creature; and, moreover, he is passing through a defiled and defiling place; and hence the unspeakable blessedness of knowing that the Lord Jesus is ever girded on his behalf, in order to wash away every soil which he contracts in his daily walk, so that he may ever be maintained practically in the integrity of the position into which the blood has introduced him. The Lord be praised for such ample provision! Well may we say, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want."

May we enter into the truth and value of all this, and thus be able to follow the blessed example set before us in this chapter. "I have given you," says our Lord, "an example that ye should do as I have done to you." How are we to do this? By walking in communion with Christ, we shall be able to cleanse each other's ways through the action of the word of God. If I see a brother pursuing a wrong course, adopting a wrong habit, or standing in an unclean association, I should bring the word to bear upon him so that he may be fully delivered from the evil thing.

Keeping First Things First: Unto Christ - by Him, for Him

Two Christians were speaking together about their privileges and responsibilities, when one of them said, "I think the first thing is for a Christian to do all the good he can."

"I do not," replied the other, "for God's Word shows that to be the third thing."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, turn to Heb. 13:12-16 and you will see: "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Now we learn here that Jesus suffered without the gate; that is, outside the Jewish order of things, which was defiled and coming unto judgment, that He might sanctify (or set apart) the people with His own blood; and then three exhortations follow for the Christian, and the order in which they are presented is most important. Doing good, you will find, comes third.

First, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach"; that is, get into the right company, in a right position. Christ is outside the Jewish order of things revived in Christendom under other names; and the Christian is first of all to be found in His company. He is not exhorted to go forth without the camp unto Him, but unto Him without the camp. His Person is the attraction. He suffered outside, and He takes His place outside, and He would have us with Him. What heart that beats true to Him will not desire to be found there? That is where His presence is known and enjoyed. Could we be in better company? May every Christian reader of these lines be found there.

Second, "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." This is sure to be the spontaneous result if the soul is in communion with Him. Get into His company, and the joy of His presence and the glories of His Person revealed to the soul by the Holy Spirit, will surely cause the heart to over flow in worship, praise, and thanksgiving; and the lips will be found expressing the heart's joy in the ear of God. One continual stream of praise will ascend to God by Him. In the company of Christ, in a right position, with the soul in communion, God and what is due to Him will be before us before we think of man.

Third, "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." The activity of the love of God in a Christian toward his fellow men comes third and last. To do good, etc. is perfectly right, but the glory of Christ stands first; and the worship of God stands before service toward men. The order is most instructive. And how are we to do good? To express Christ morally in our ways. He went about doing good. And if we are walking in the power

of the Spirit who dwells in us, goodness will manifest itself in innumerable ways in ministering for Him, both to the souls and bodies of those around us. And the heart being happy and confident in God as to temporal resources, liberality will characterize us in communicating of our substance for the benefit of others. Selfishness will depart, self being displaced by Christ.

The divine order then is to go forth to Christ first, to praise God by Him second, and to do good for Him (that is, in His name) third.

Fellow-Christian, do you answer to this?

An Appeal in These Last Moments

"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.

If there ever was a day when this word of exhortation and encouragement was needed, it is today, and especially for the young Christian. Every evil doctrine is on the increase, and the advocates of such are showing increased energy in spreading them, and often with considerable self-sacrifice. On the other hand, those who are the Lord's are to a great extent folding their hands, taking their leisure, and giving Christ up to His enemies. May this not be the case with any of our readers, but may each of us "be... steadfast, unmovable." Let us allow nothing to turn us out of the way, but be unmovable from the path of faithfulness and response of heart to the Lord for all He has done for us. He has saved our souls at the great expense of giving Himself for us, and what more could He give than His life? He is not satisfied with doing this, but He is coming again for us, as the previous verses show, at any moment, to take us to be forever with Himself; and this is the reason for this word of exhortation.

Is that blessed hope so before our hearts, do we have it so as a present reality, that we are abounding in the work of the Lord? Let each of us ask ourselves the question, What am I doing for my Lord? What am I doing for the good of His people? What am I doing for the lost and perishing all around me? What about that unsaved classmate? that unsaved fellow workman? or that saved friend who needs instruction and encouragement in the things of God? Often just a word to a young Christian friend, or a decided stand for the Lord, in all lowliness and meekness, gives encouragement to the other for faithfulness of walk. If we feel unable to speak, we have the printed matter that can be procured at a very low price and sent to him each month. The little we do, if watered by prayer, with the Lord's blessing upon it, who can tell the extent of the blessing and the reward in that day so near? May we be assured and encouraged by the last sentence, "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Law and Grace, Milk and Vinegar: Effect of Both Is Lost

Confounding the gospel of the grace of God that brings salvation, with the law, hinders the proper effect of both in the soul. If I take a gallon of milk and a gallon of vinegar, and mix them together, I destroy or nullify the peculiar properties of both. Just so it is when the law and the gospel are confounded together. The sharp, searching convicting power of the law is blunted while the saving, peace-giving character of the gospel is not known. It will help much to a better understanding of the difference to see from the Word of God the different ways in which He

has dealt with man from the beginning.

There was first the trial of innocence in the garden of Eden - and how soon failure came in there we all know. Driven out from that garden of delights, man, left to his conscience, soon became so bad that "the earth... was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11), and the deluge came. Then after the confusion of speech at Babel, and the dispersion of the different branches of Noah's descendants, all lapsed into idolatry (Josh. 24:14). God now called out Abraham, and out of his loins raised up a nation, the nation of Israel, with whom He was pleased to identify Himself, and to whom He made Himself known while allowing the rest of the nations to take their own way, though not leaving them without a witness (Acts 14:15-17). But it was in Israel - that favored portion of the human family - that the trial of man was carried on. Now in order that man might have the opportunity of showing whether he could stand before God in his own righteousness or not, the law - a perfect rule or standard of conduct toward God and toward his neighbor - was given him.

A farmer, wishing to test a certain kind of seed, does not sow his whole farm with it, but chooses a portion, the very best part; and after having cultivated it, he sows the seed and waits patiently for the harvest. If in result he finds nothing but weeds, he pronounces the seed worthless. Just so with God. He selected a portion of the human family, and to them He gave the law. It is most important to remember that the law was never given by God to mankind in general. The opening words of the Decalogue itself show that it was not: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt." Exod. 20:2. Did He bring the Egyptians out of Egypt, or the Philistines, or the Moabites? Let us bear this in mind.

Now what was the outcome of man's being placed under this perfect rule of conduct? No sooner was it given than it was broken. While Moses was on the fiery mount receiving that law which said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," the people on the plain were dancing round the calf which their own hands had made (Exod. 32). But more; God sent His well-beloved Son into the world, and to that very people to whom the law said, Love your neighbor as yourself (was there ever a neighbor like Jesus?), and what was the result? They spat in His face and cried, "Away with Him, crucify Him."

Such are the results of the different ways in which God has dealt with man while on his probation. Each test only brought out more fully the state of the heart toward God, until it was written, "Now

have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father" (John 15:24).

But I desire to turn to the New Testament to learn there the effect of the law in the conscience of the sinner. In Rom. 3:20 we read, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Now here we have two very plain, positive statements, both of which are in direct opposition to much current teaching of the present day. In the first we are told what the law cannot do - it cannot justify. In the second we learn what it does do - it gives the knowledge of sin. That is very plain and simple. So also in chapter 7:7: "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law." Again we read, in Gal. 3:24, "So that the law has been our tutor [schoolmaster] up to Christ" (J.N.D. Trans.). What is the function of a schoolmaster or tutor? It is to impart knowledge. What then is the knowledge which the law imparts? Is it the knowledge of God and His salvation? No, verily; but on the contrary it gives the knowledge of sin in the very springs of our moral being, as those two passages in Romans tell us.

But further we read in 1 Cor. 15:56. "And the strength of sin is the law." Now what are we to understand by that? Simply this - no sooner is a prohibition made than the desire to do what was forbidden is awakened in each person. Such is poor, fallen human nature. The application of even the holy, just, and good law of God only calls sins into activity. (See Rom. 7:5, 8, 9.) So in 2 Cor. 3:7, 9 the law is called "the ministration of death" and "the ministration of condemnation." The experiences of a soul learning this experimentally are given us in Rom. 7:7-24, which I would earnestly recommend to the prayerful study of my readers. Such scriptures as have already been referred to, show the effect of the law in the conscience; it writes the sentence of death there. But I would also refer to one portion where the law is put in contrast with the gospel.

One has but to turn to the epistle to the Galatians to see how energetically the Holy Spirit, by the Apostle, refuses to allow the law to be mixed up with the gospel. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (chap. 1-4.) The two systems - law and grace - are perfectly distinct, and indeed so far opposed to each other that to mingle them is to destroy the distinctive features of each. In chapter 3:10 we read, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Note, it does not say, "as many as break the law," but "as many as are of the works of the law." No child of Adam can be on that ground with God without being under the curse.

"But," says the Apostle, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law" (v. 13). "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Chap. 4:4, 5. Now if the law was perfectly suited to meet the needs of the sinner, why the necessity that Christ should redeem them that were under it - the Jews?

But it may be asked, Of what use then was the law? To answer that question one has but to call attention to Gal. 3:19-26, where the Apostle in the wisdom of God takes it up and answers it in the most beautiful detail. He then shows that it had its place before Christ or faith, as a principle of relationship with God, came; but now that Christ is come, we who believe are no longer under law. "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. 6:14. We can no more have Christ as our Savior, and be at the same time under law, than a woman can have two husbands without being an adulteress. Those that were under the law, having believed the gospel, are set free from the law in order to be to Christ. His death on the cross is the severance of the tie that bound them to

the law. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Rom. 7:4. (See Rom. 7:16; Gal. 2:19, 20.)

Thus we see that as a principle of relationship with God the law is superseded by the gospel. Christ takes the place of Moses. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17. And instead of the law being the Christian's rule, we read, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." 1 John 2:6.

Lessons Learned

"So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd" (Jonah 4:6). Not only was he "glad," but he was "exceeding glad" because of the gourd, as he had been exceedingly displeased because of God's mercy. How we delight in those temporal mercies that add to our ease and comfort! The luxuries of the present day are often to us what Jonah's gourd was to him - the cause of exceeding gladness.

"But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered." v. 7. Whether a whale or a worm the same word is used. God "prepared" them both. As we see those things which have added to our ease and pleasure, fade and die, we may do well to consider whether it is our own loving God who Himself has prepared the worm to make them pass away. We may learn lessons in adversity, in scorching suns, in poverty and want, that we never could have learned in prosperity and ease and luxury.

The Living One

"I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:18).

My friends, do not be cast down. Though there is much that is sad and dark, both in the Church and in the world, all will be well, for Jesus Christ lives. I like the story of Dr. Dale, who rose from his desk with that word, "Jesus Christ is alive today," and preached thenceforth with a force which even he had never known before. He has given eternal life to His people, undying promises, unfailing strength, unfading glory. Let us keep close to Him, and we shall have no cause to be afraid of what is coming.

Lost Years

A Christian soldier lay dying. As he looked back over his recent years, he was condemning himself. It was true he had lived in an upright way, and his life had thus witnessed for righteousness. But he had not been active in seeking to make the Savior known to others. Speaking to a fellow believer, he remarked, "I die as a Christian, and I die contented; but Oh, if I could have died as a Christian worker."

The Love of Christ, Which Passeth Knowledge

Eph. 3:1.1-21

In the prayer in chapter 3 the Apostle loses himself, as it were, and no wonder. After he had said, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," he adds, "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love" (that is what God is, the divine nature), "may be able to comprehend with all saints" (taking in the whole unity in which the Holy Spirit dwells), "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" - he has got into the infinitude of all God's thoughts and purposes of blessing, and he cannot say of what. Just as the groanings could not be uttered, so the thought cannot be uttered. It is God that has come in, and Christ fills all things according to the power of redemption, from the throne of God down to the dust of death, and from the dust of death up to the throne of God. Having all things, and filling all things (he says), here I am placed in the midst of this infinitude; and then he adds, "and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." He could go to no place but there he found infinite love and power, the love that brought Christ down, and the power that took Christ up again.

This meets all the exercises of the heart. If brought down even as Christ came down, into the dust of death, the Holy Spirit comes down to the poor man who feels this power of death in his soul, and dwells in him, and carries him up by the knowledge of redemption into all the fullness of God Himself.

Well, that, beloved, is the result of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit down here, consequent upon redemption accomplished by Christ. The Holy Spirit can come and bring peace to our souls, and the effect of that peace to our souls is to make us pass through all the evil around "according to the power of God." When the Apostle speaks to Timothy, he says, "Be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." Where shall we stop? The soul rejoices in that which must be the joy and gladness of the heart that knows God has come down to dwell in it - the immutable blessedness of God's presence. Then, whatever the circumstances in which we are placed, if they be only those of sorrow and trial, what is the consequence? God ministers of the fullness of the sympathy of His love to our souls; and thus they become, so to speak, as a door or a chink to let God in. All the riches, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," are ours, and Christ fills everything.

There is not anything we can think of but we find there of the fullness of Christ. If we think of death, we see Christ there; of sin, we do not know what sin is fully until we see Christ "made sin"; of God, it is only in Christ we can know God; of man, it is only in Christ we can see man raised to the height of his blessing; of peace, it is through Christ we know the peace of God; of life, Christ is our life; of glory, it is all in Christ. There is not anything, no matter what we think of, whether in creation or above it, or between God and man, but we must think of Christ in it all. He is the "head of His body, the church, which is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." We can turn our thoughts to no

one thing in which. we do not find the fullness of Christ; and by the power of the Holy Spirit our souls are brought into the joy of this fullness, as that to which we are through living union with Him, everlastingly and perfectly united.

There is another point which I have not touched upon, the practical effect of this. What would the effect be on our souls if we really felt we were builded together, if we felt that in the whole world Christians were in truth the dwelling place of God? What a thought should we have to act upon as to everything! That by which the Church of God has been corrupted, ordinances and the like, would disappear as clouds before the presence of the sun. And what thoughts of glory should we have, what thoughts of holiness, what peace as to practical circumstances, what jealousy of grieving the Holy Spirit, what love toward all saints, what joy, what confidence! How we should (not in pride, but in the sense that God was there) mock at all our enemies (Isa. 37:22, 23), how live and act among men as "sons" and "heirs" of God! What power for everything, in short, would be ours if we remembered the completeness, the peace giving completeness, of redemption, and could really say that God was dwelling with us!

This is our portion, and whatever our weakness and infirmity (and alas! it is very great), whatever our failure, still it remains the same. We may grieve the Spirit, we may weaken the consciousness of our joy, but still God is with us. The Holy Spirit dwells among us.

May the Lord give us to know and to own what this presence of God in the earth, and that with men, is by reason of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Love's Ocean Depths

Thou hast begun to show me, Lord,
And what shall be the ending?
I've touched the fringe of what Thou art,
And that is all transcending;
I'm standing on the rippling shore;
Love's ocean depths are all before.

Blessing will be the portion of those who company with the Lord in separation from the world and the things of earth, with the Holy Spirit to instruct in things above the earth, and centered in Christ now glorified according to God's purpose, to be known and understood by His own at this present time.

Martyrdom of Stephen

No heart that knows anything of the love of Christ can fail to be touched with the devotedness and faithfulness of Stephen, even unto death, as recorded in Acts 6 and 7. This blessed servant of God is first mentioned as a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and was therefore chosen with six others by the assembly at Jerusalem, and appointed by the apostles to the charge of caring for the temporal needs of the saints (Acts 6:1-6). A mighty work of God's Spirit followed. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people (Acts 6:7, 8). Satan, ever on the alert, stirred up certain men to dispute with him, but they were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake (Acts 6:9, 10). Changing their tactics, his enemies charged him with uttering blasphemous words and, producing false witnesses, they brought him as a prisoner before the council.

God was behind all the scenes and, sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit, Stephen, the witness for Christ and Christianity, bore faithful testimony for his Master in the presence of the high priest and the people who had refused and murdered Him. It is a remarkable scene, and a deeply solemn moment in the history of the Jews.

All that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him who was falsely accused, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. Occupied with Christ in glory, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his very face reflects the rays of His glorious countenance before them all. Then said the high priest, "Are these things so?" (Acts 6:15; 7:1).

Calmly and fearlessly he answered by reciting briefly the history of Israel. Profound silence reigned through the great assembly as he brought before them, point by point, from Abraham onward, the ways of the God of glory with His ancient people. Coming to the days of the building of the temple by Solomon, he said, "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made all these things?" (For he had been charged with speaking blasphemous words against this holy place.) And then, knowing the unrelenting hatred of his foes, with unquailing eye and unflinching courage he charges them solemnly in the presence of God: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." (Acts 7:48-53.) With irresistible wisdom and spirit he brings to bear upon their consciences Israel's four damning sins: the resistance of the Holy Ghost, the persecution of the prophets of God, the betrayal and murder of the Son of God, the Just One, and the breaking of His holy law.

They listen to him to this point, when suddenly their pent-up rage bursts forth in all its violence. "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of

God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

His faithful testimony is received with every expression of the deep-seated enmity against God of which the heart of man is capable. Instead of being pricked in their heart, like many others (Acts 2:37), they were cut to the heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazing straight into the very glory of God (for the heavens were opened above him), beholds his beloved Master standing as the glorified Man, exalted at the right hand of God Himself. In living words he testifies of Him whom he saw, but his voice is drowned by the vociferous cries of the vast concourse before him. The high priest, the council, the elders, the scribes, the false witnesses, the people - all are against him, and not only so, but also against Christ. Rushing upon him like hungry wolves, they "cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."

Light from the glory shines before them. The Holy Spirit in Stephen bears witness to the glorified Man, Jesus, the Son of the living God, but they will have none of it. They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). As their fathers had done, as Stephen had said, so do they (Acts 7:51). In longsuffering mercy God gave them one more opportunity to repent, and they use the occasion to dye themselves still deeper in wickedness; and their cup of iniquity, already full, flows over in the resistance of the Holy Spirit and the murder of Stephen. The awful enmity of man in the flesh against God in the death of Christ finds its expression once again in the death of His faithful servant. They are cut to the heart, and gnash on him with their teeth, cry with a loud voice, stop their ears, run upon him with their feet with one accord, and cast him out and stone him with their hands. Their hearts, their teeth, their voices, their ears, their feet, their wills, their hands, are all against him.

A young man, Saul, mentioned for the first time, stands calmly witnessing the awful deed. Himself ere long was to be taken up by the superabounding grace of God and become the most faithful witness for Christ the world has ever seen. But here as a poor blinded religious devotee without Christ, he sees how a Christian can die for the truth of God, and also an expression of the awful state of man in the flesh without Him. Afterward, he became the instrument in God's hand to bring the latter out for its worldwide publication in the forcible language of the epistle to the Romans. Chapter 3:10-18 was manifested before his very eyes.

"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Acts 7:59, 60. How deeply blessed to see the calm of this beloved servant of God at this testing moment! He had drunk deeply of the spirit of his Master, and follows Him in the same lamb-like manner to a martyr's violent death. In spirit already in the presence of the Lord, he yields himself without a murmur to the hands of his enemies, swift to shed his blood. Bold in the defense of the precious truth of God, not a word escaped his lips in self-defense. Following closely in the footsteps of His Savior, as the stones in thick succession fly about him, doing their deadly work, he called upon God, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He commends his spirit to Him who gave it, and then calmly kneeling down, his last prayer in a loud voice ascends to God - a prayer for his foes. He pleads for mercy upon his murderers, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." One moment

exposed to all the malice of a God-hating world, the next his spirit had passed away into the blissful presence of his Savior. He went to be with Christ, which is far better; absent from the body, present with the Lord (Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8).

The key to all this is found in Stephen's occupation with Christ in glory in the power of the Holy Spirit. Saved by grace, and sustained by divine power, he bore an unflinching testimony that Jesus was indeed the Christ, glorified in the presence of God, sealing it with his blood. Hence, he became the first Christian martyr, and stands upon the page of Scripture throughout the hour of Christ's rejection from the world, an encouragement to faithfulness to every believer. May each believer be found having Christ at the right hand of God as the one object which fills the vision of his soul, so that in the power of the Holy Spirit we may follow Him as our model and example here until we behold His blessed face.

Press we on our pilgrim journey

Upward to the prize in store,

Treading in the Master's footprints,

Who has passed this way before.

Meditation

We cannot be in the enjoyment of our heavenly blessings until we have given up looking for rest here. Until we are made willing to accept the wilderness, we will not cross the Jordan into Canaan to find our delights there (Josh. 1-5; Eph. 1-3; 1 Cor. 2:6-16). How blessed to know that the way has been opened up for us through the death of Christ the true Ark, and that as dead and risen with Him we can enjoy life in association with Him on the resurrection side of death before His Father and His God (Col. 3:1-3). How blessed to remember the Lord in His death in the consciousness of all that His death has accomplished for us!

Modern Day Passover

The manners and customs of the Jews in the keeping of the Passover (Pesach) this month are very interesting, especially when considered in the light of the Holy Scriptures, but first let us trace this great Jewish festival from its beginning.

It is now almost 3500 years since God brought the Israelites out of Egypt. At that time they were greatly oppressed by the Egyptians, and God asked Pharaoh to let His people go, but he would not. Plague succeeded plague, but Pharaoh only hardened his heart, until at length God sent an angel to slay all the first-born in the land of Egypt. But for the angel to destroy only the firstborn of the Egyptians, and not those of the Israelites, called for some line of demarcation, for surely all were sinners. Therefore Moses said to the people: "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." Exod. 11:7. And how did the Lord make a difference? By the application of the blood of the slain lamb to the lintels and doorposts of the Israelitish homes. The passover lamb must needs die and its blood be applied to each house individually. And God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Exod. 12:13.

The deliverance of the people from the judgment inflicted on the first-born, and their subsequent deliverance from Egypt and all the power of Pharaoh, through the Red Sea, was of such great significance that God changed the calendar for His people. The ordinary year had been running its course, but God said, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." The month when they were redeemed by the blood of the lamb was to be a new beginning for them. And is it not so in a better sense for us who have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ? We have not only been delivered from the judgment to come, but have been put into an entirely new position; that is, "in Christ," who in resurrection is "the beginning of the creation of God." "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5:17.

God also gave the Israelites His instructions for the keeping of the Passover, year by year, when they came into the land of Canaan. It was to be done on the 14th day of the month Nissan, and to be followed at once by the feast of unleavened bread which was to last seven days. Directions were given in Exod. 12 and 13, Lev. 23, and Deut. 16 (In Deut. 16 it would appear that the feast of unleavened bread may sometimes be called the Passover, for sacrifices from the "herd" would doubtless be connected with the feast of unleavened bread.)

When we come to 2 Kings 23, and read about the revival under Josiah the king of Judah, there is this striking comment: "Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem." vv. 22, 23. How strange that in all the vigorous days of Israel under David, and in the balmy, happy days under Solomon, not such a passover was kept as it was written. And yet should we count it strange when Christians who have been more highly favored have so signally failed to keep the

Lord's one request, "This do in remembrance of Me," as it is written? Alas, it is failure whether we look at Israel or the Church; wherever man is found, he has failed. (Except that one perfect Man who was once here.)

When we come to the New Testament we find the Passover being kept by the Jews at Jerusalem, but in John's Gospel it is called "the Jews' passover," and "the passover, a feast of the Jews," and not a "feast of the LORD" as it was originally called and instituted. How like what has become of the "Lord's supper"! It has become a mass, a sacrament, a life-giving ordinance, or empty form and ritual, while the "Lord's table" has become tables of men or of creeds.

But let us pass down through the centuries and we come to April, 1978. On the seventh of this month, Jews throughout the world will keep the Passover (Pesach), and follow through with their religious rites for another seven days. Yes, they are still keeping the Passover.

When the Jews gather in their homes on April 7th (and also on the 8th) for "Seder" (order of service), they will have much that was mentioned in Exodus, and also much that has come in through the years. They will eat unleavened bread (matzoth), and in fact they will put all leaven out of their houses, or hide it away, for the whole eight days of the Pesach festival. They will have a recitation of the "Hagadah" (the account of their affliction in Egypt, their exodus, etc.). This is evidently in keeping with the instruction of Exod. 12:25-27: "And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as He hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel," etc. There will be something on the table (moror - such as horseradish) to remind them of the bitter herbs (Exod. 12:8).

In reading of the customs and traditions of the Jews we came across some interesting innovations. At the Seder they drink four cups of wine. This was not given in any Old Testament instruction, but it seems to have come in before the days of our Lord. We read in Luke 22 that He desired to keep that last Passover with His disciples, and that He did so in the upper room. At that time a cup of wine was connected with the supper, and we are told by some writers that four cups during the meal were then in vogue. The Lord Jesus refused to drink of the cup of wine which was associated with the Passover (see chap. 22:17, 18), and then instituted the remembrance of Himself in death. The Passover looked forward to His death as the true Lamb of God, and the Lord's supper is a memorial to look back to it.

A strange custom that came in somewhere along the years, and which is very interesting as throwing some light on that people who are "beloved for the fathers' sakes," is that they also fill a fifth cup with wine which is not touched by anyone at the table - it is for the prophet Elijah, and during the meal someone is sent to open the door so that he can come in. They still look upon Elijah as the great prophet to bring them into blessing. This reminds us that when John the Baptist came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and calling on the people to repent, they first asked him, "Who art thou?" He replied, "I am not the Christ"; whereupon they asked him, "Art thou Elias [Elijah]?" Then, as now, they were looking for Elijah.

Their hopes of blessing with the coming of the prophet Elijah are based upon the last chapter in the Old Testament. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and

dreadful day of the LORD." v. 5. Thus their Scriptures close with the prophecy of the coming of Elijah, but note that his coming is before "the great and dreadful day of the LORD." His coming will precede the coming of the Son of man in power and great glory, when the Jews will be put through the "day of atonement" in reality.

It is not that the actual Elijah of the days of Ahab will have to come back to the earth, but it will be one of like character - one who will come to call Israel back to the God of their fathers, for at that time the majority of them will have accepted the false king in Jerusalem as their Messiah.

One thing that they do not know today is that John the Baptist came "in the spirit and power of Elias" (Elijah), but they would not receive him. The Lord Jesus said to the multitude concerning John, "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." Matt. 11:14. If they had received John and his message, then he would have been the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy to them, but they rejected John who was the Lord's forerunner, and then rejected the Lord, their Messiah. Once when Jesus spoke to His disciples of His death and resurrection, they "asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them." Matt. 17:10-12. But however blinded they have been regarding Jesus as their Messiah, there is still a hope in their breasts of Israel's blessing. Many of them, doubtless, only carry out this ritual because it is the custom to do so, while they have no real comprehension of their true hope; but nevertheless it does indicate that lying buried beneath much rubbish and tradition there is still the hope of Israel's recovery.

During the days of "Jacob's trouble," the "great tribulation," God will have witnesses in Jerusalem, spoken of in Rev. 11 as "two witnesses" who will "have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." v. 6. These witnesses will have the dual character of Elijah (power to shut heaven that it does not rain for three and one half years), and of Moses (power to smite the earth with plagues). The reason for these special features will be that as Elijah prophesied for God among an apostate people who were worshiping a false god, so will these speak for God among an apostate nation who have accepted the antichrist; and as Moses witnessed for God before a hostile Gentile power, so will these witness before the God-defying head of the revived Roman Empire, called the beast, who will openly and wantonly blaspheme God. But when these things have come to pass, then the days of Israel's travail will be almost over, and before long the 24th Psalm will have its fulfillment, when the "King of glory" shall enter. Israel's long tragic suffering and future hope are beautifully put together by the poet:

"Lift up your heads, eternal gates;

A glowing dawn shines o'er ye!

At Salem's door the Sov'reign waits;

He is the King of glory!

"The palms of yore their branches waved,

When Judah's sons were singing:

`Hosanna! Zion shall be saved,'
Their gentle Monarch bringing.
"But the sun's light at midday died,
And Judah's matrons, wailing,
Lamented loud the Crucified,
All trace of glory failing!
"Those gloomy years have rolled away -
The years of Israel's mourning;
The rising sun with healing ray
Proclaims the King's returning.
"Lift up your heads, eternal gates,
Transcendent dawn glows o'er ye!
At Salem's door Messiah waits;
He is the King of glory."

The Morning Star

It has been truly said by someone, that the Old Testament Scriptures end with the hope of the coming of the "Sun of Righteousness"; and the New with that of the "Morning Star." Sweetly beautiful is this. The godly remnant of Israel, who feared the Lord and spake often one to another (Mal. 3), had that precious consolation before them - that of the coming of the Sun of Righteousness "with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4). And we find them in Luke 2, the Simeons and Annas, and "all them that looked for redemption in Israel."

But, alas, His beams fell coldly on the hearts of His nation; they had no hearts for Him. Men were morally unfit to have God among them; and so He was obliged to hide His beams of blessing in the darkened scene that surrounded His cross, and to reserve the day of blessing till another season. Meanwhile our calling was revealed and our hope presented to us; not as the Sun of Righteousness, but as the Morning Star.

The more we contemplate the fitness of this symbol of our hope, the more does its divine origin appear. It is the watchman during the long night who sees the morning star for a few moments, while the darkness is rolling itself away from off the face of the earth, and before the beams of the sun enliven the earth with their rays. And so with the Christian's hope; he watches during the moral darkness of the world, till the dawn; and just as the darkness is deepest, and is about to roll itself away before the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, his hope is rewarded in seeing the Morning Star (Rev. 22:16), in His earliest brightness, coming to take up His people to Himself, that they might shine forth with Him as the sun in the kingdom of their Father in the heavenlies (Matt. 13:43), when He reveals Himself to the millennial earth as the Sun of Righteousness.

"I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and Morning Star.... He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22:16, 20.

The Need of Exercising Grace

"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit" "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

It is a fatal mistake to suppose that this unity can be kept in a legal way. It must be grace. It must be the fruit of communion with Christ, and living of His life. I cannot take my own yardstick and measure everybody else by that. I cannot lay down my interpretations of Scripture and say every man must walk by this rule. That is to make a law of Scripture and put everybody on legal ground. And this is the worst kind of legalism.

If our minds are formed by the Word and Spirit of God, others will feel the power... and they will be edified.

If I am handling the Word of God in a legal way, I will only provoke the flesh, and no good will result. I cannot teach you the Word of God with a sledge hammer. The teaching must be through the operation of the Spirit. And grace characterizes this operation. So I must be gracious, patient, loving.

Let brotherly love abound, and bitterness be put away - edifying one another in love.

Occupied Only With Christ

Are we dwellers on earth, or in spirit in heaven? Are we so busy and taken up with this scene down here that it looks as if we were of it, or have we Christ's character? Our Lord was so completely separate that He could find no joy here. This world ought not to be the place where our hearts find their nourishment and occupation. It will not be so if the Spirit occupies us with the things of Christ, and our hearts are set on Him; He in heaven will be our Object, and the things of the world cannot then lay hold of our affections.

There should be no point down here, nothing to hold us save being linked up with Christ where He is. We want that Nazarite power, so as to be associated with Christ up there, that be it what it may that would lead captive down here, we can let it go and be occupied only with Christ all the way on to the glory where we are to be with Him.

When God has brought people into this relationship, His love does desire that they, as His people, should serve Him; but how? Ah! He says, Give a cup of cold water - keep your garments clean - go and visit the sick and the widow - keep yourselves unspotted from the world.

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Opened Eyes

"LORD, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see" (2 Kings 6:17).

"The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them." Pro. 20:12. It is as much the work of God to open the one as the other. When, as the anointed of Jehovah, the Lord Jesus entered upon His blessed service to man, we read in Luke 4:18 that one of His works of goodness and grace was to open the eyes of the blind. His words in John 9:39-41 make it quite clear that physical blindness was not the only thing contemplated in that wondrous service, nor indeed the main thing, for He came into this world "that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made

blind."

The beautiful incident recorded in 2 Kings 6, from which we quote the short direct prayer that

stands at the head of this paper, has a most important lesson for us who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. How often do we feel ready to say like the servant of the man of God, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?"

The king of Syria had wondered how his plans should so frequently become known to the king of Israel with whom he was at war, but it was the work of no treacherous spy. One of his own servants let out the secret of "the prophet that is in Israel," that "tellethe the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber."

The Syrian king's next move, therefore, is to take the prophet, and accordingly he attempts to cut off all escape by surrounding the prophet's house with his army. What a sight met the astonished gaze of Elisha's servant on that early morning as he found the prophet's house compassed on all sides by the great host of Syrian horses and chariots! What could two defenseless men do in the face of such a mighty company? Yet Elisha answers with perfect calmness, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And he prays not for deliverance, for that, with the opened eyes of faith, he already saw was amply provided; but that the eyes of his servant might be opened to see what God could do for those that trust in Him (Psa. 31:19, 20).

How often we find these words, "Fear not," on the lips of our blessed Master and Lord in the days of His sojourn here on earth. With them He heals the grief of Jairus when he thought death had closed the door of hope as to the life of his beloved daughter (Luke 8:50); and with the same words He comforts the hearts of His disciples in view of apparent loss in this world through following Him (Luke 12:32). And again, "Fear not" is upon His lips when He lays His right hand of power upon the prostrate Apostle John in lonely Patmos, who, overcome by the awful majesty of His appearance, "fell at His feet as dead."

In each case too there is the same call for the faith that brings in God and His unfailing resources.

Elisha has no concern for himself, no fear of the Syrian hosts. It is delightful to think of that short prayer uttered in such simple faith: "LORD, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see." And how immediate the answer - "And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw."

Saw what? A very early forecast of the truth of the word repeated, or rather reproduced, in Rom. 8:31: "If God be for us, who can be against us."

But again Elisha prays, and this time it is a very great contrast. "Smite this people... with blindness," which is also immediately answered. But it is not for judgment on his enemies that he prays thus; the prophet leads them to Samaria, and then once more the prayer is uttered, "Loin, open the eyes of these men, that they may see"; and with what consternation must the Syrians have found themselves "in the midst of Samaria."

But no thought of revenge or punishment is in the prophet's mind. To the question of the king of Israel, "Shall I smite?" comes the wonderful answer, "Thou shalt not smite... set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master." What a lesson for us, dear fellow-Christian, as to the power of grace! "So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." What conquest could have

effected such a result as that?

There are two spheres in which we may get a salutary lesson from these striking incidents ---one as to our individual path and prospects, and the other as to the Church's need and state today. How often for ourselves in our family cares, business experiences, everyday trials and infirmities, we need to have our eyes opened as to who is for us, to remind ourselves of that love "that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," and consequently, "How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). Yet in times of pressure and loneliness. have we not to watch against the inclination to say. -Alas.... how shall we do?"

But this is even more felt perhaps when we are exercised as to the state of the Lord's people, the condition of Christian testimony generally, and the many signs of rapidly approaching apostasy.

Here we may well learn something from Balaam's history. Hired by Balak to curse Israel, he is powerless to do so, notwithstanding his own will and love of gain; and we find he repeats again and again, that he speaks as the man "who had his eyes shut, but now opened" (Numb. 24:3; margin).

Can we think what he would have said had his eyes not been opened? But what a commentary all he says is on the words of the prophet Elisha: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." From the top of the rocks Balaam is made to bear an unwilling testimony to God's view of His earthly people, Israel. They are to Him a called, justified, and glory-destined people.

And, dear fellow-Christian, have we not an equal call to rise up to the thoughts of God about His people today? Think what they are to the heart of Him who "loved the church, and gave Himself for it," and waits expectantly for the moment when He shall "present it to Himself."

Our Weakness - Christ's Fullness

At the present time there is a great lack among the children of God of the consciousness of their feebleness, and of being faithful to the deposit made by God. They do not see that one great object in giving it, is to make us remember in our scenes of trial, that God is to us what He was to Israel, carrying them through the wilderness; that we may have the consciousness of all the fullness there is in Christ and in God for us. He means us to see our weakness, but to know in the midst of it that He has stores in Jesus whose fullness is to fill us.

Overheard in an Orchard

Said the robin to the sparrow,

"I should really like to know

Why these anxious human beings

Rush about and worry so."

Said the sparrow to the robin,

"Friend, I think that it must be

That they have no heavenly Father,

Such as cares for you and me."

But the sparrow was wrong, believer. Humans have a heavenly Father, but they do not trust His almighty love and care for them, so they "rush about and worry so."

But not only does covetousness produce restlessness of soul and worry; it so hinders quiet happy communion with the Father and the Son that joy is lost, and there is no strength for either worship or service except perhaps in a legal way. And the Christian becomes dull and cold and shows little sign of life. Such are seldom heard to open their mouths either in the worship meeting or the prayer meeting to God the Father or the Son. Yet the Son says,

"Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (S. of Sol. 2:14). If the Christian goes on indulging this spirit of greediness for gain God tells us that such a one falls "into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.... But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." 1 Tim. 6:9, 11, 12.

But does not all this need power, spiritual strength? Certainly it does, and it is to be found in the risen, ascended One, to whom we are united, as well as in whom we are accepted, and to whom we belong. For all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him, and we are filled full, complete in Him, and His "grace is sufficient" for us - His "strength... made perfect in weakness." So we must neither excuse ourselves nor be discouraged. We "can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth" us, those who look to Him - to Him who loves us as a man loves himself, as part of Himself.

So, dear Christian reader, let us not be misled by a frequent misquotation of those words in Rom. 12:11 as telling us to be "diligent in business." It does not say so. Read it carefully for yourself, and if you have a New Translation, read it there also. For I am persuaded that many of us are, by misquoting this scripture, falling into the snare of covetousness, or greediness for gain, and are not

only being robbed of much joy in the Lord, but are injuring the assemblies where we meet and are turning others out of the way by our example.

Our blessed Lord in Luke 12, already referred to, says to us, if inclined to anxiety as to providing necessary things for self or family, don't take anxious thought about these things; and in Matthew, speaking to His own in the sermon on the mount, tells us to seek first the things of God - the kingdom -and all that is necessary - that which we are to be contented with - that which the ravens and lilies get from Him - shall be added unto us. And that precious expression of His loving care for us comes in to encourage us.

"Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things" (Luke 12:30).

"O to trust Him then more fully, Just to simply move

In the conscious calm enjoyment Of the Father's love;

Knowing that life's checkered pathway Leadeth to His rest,

Satisfied the way He taketh Must be always best."

Just here let me notice again the scripture that is often misquoted and is by this means used by Satan to incite God's dear children into this snare of yielding to "greediness for gain." Instead, we are told to go on quietly with God, content with making a living, and "provide things honest in the sight of all men." I refer to Rom. 12:11, 17. The 11th verse is generally quoted to say "diligent in business," etc. It is not such thing, but "not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" - a very different thing from diligently giving all time and energies to making money, greedy for gain, and little or no thought of serving the Lord in business.

Alas! how much we Christians have failed, and are failing in this ensnaring engrossment with our own things, instead of the things of the Lord Jesus! This happens even to the point of forsaking the assembling of ourselves together and encouraging one another in the weekly prayer meeting and the reading meeting, some turning up only at the Lord's day meeting for breaking of bread.

Dear Christian reader, consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. May His great and gracious unchanging love for us, told out on the cross, which still goes on toward us now up on the throne, so constrain our hearts that we may put Christ and God's things first, and live, not only to ourselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again, enjoying the great gain of godliness with contentment.

Peace - When?

"Except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Psalm 127:1.

Peace, in a world that slew the Prince of Peace!

Can peace in such a world be ever won

By force of arms or by a pact of men,

However solemnly agreed upon?

Can human wisdom bid earth's conflict cease,

Or human plans its raging tumults quell

And usher in an era of true peace

And cause all men in harmony to dwell?

No; tasks like these are far beyond the power

Of mortal men. The world, for its release,

Must wait and watch, until shall come the hour

When rules the now rejected Prince of Peace.

When He shall reign supreme o'er lives of men,

The world will know true peace-and not

till then. E. S. Delaney

We find in John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." This is the legacy the Lord has left His people in this world while He has gone to the Father.

"Peace I leave with you." This is peace with God which Christ has made by the blood of His cross. "My peace I give unto you" is the peace He possessed as man walking down here on earth.

I have seen many who have peace with God, but I have never seen any who had made their peace with God, nor could anyone possibly do so under any circumstances. Nothing but the blood could make peace with God; and we read in Col. 1:20, Christ has "made peace through the blood of His cross."

Pharisee, Publican, and a Man in Christ

Luke 18:9-14 Cor. 12:1-11

We read in Luke 18 that "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican." Now it is not as easy to dispose of this Pharisee as people think; there is much to be said for him. He was in the temple, the right place for a religious man such as he, the place that God had appointed for worship. There is no temple now. Men have indeed tried to make imitations of it, and very poor imitations they are, but God has not ordained any place of worship on earth. Where is the place of worship now? Heaven, where Christ is.

The Pharisee was in the temple, and his first words are, "God, I thank Thee." This sounds well. What have creatures to do but to praise God? "That I am not as other men." Here he gets on rather dangerous ground, but you will observe that he thanks God for this: that he is not as others. There was not only what was negative in his case, but something positive also: "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." The Pharisee's mistake was that he stood on the ground of self in the presence of God who knew the material that was before Him; He prefers the position taken by the publican. The mistake of the Pharisee was to stand before God in the value of self. When we think of what God is - when we think of what the judgment will be - which of us would not join in David's prayer, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant"?

There are more Pharisees than people think. Have you peace with God? If not, are you on the ground of the Pharisee? is not self before you in some way? You see some who have been looked on as devout people all their lives, and yet when they come to die, they are all at sea. Is that Christianity - to leave people at sea just when they most need help? It is that bit of self they are standing on that does all the mischief.

The Lord commends the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." My heart goes with the utterance, but it is not Christian language - it would be unsuitable language for a Christian - but, beloved friends, it was a blessed utterance. It was extracted by God from a soul overwhelmed by a sense of his miserable, wretched condition. It was not a Christian's standing, but it was a blessed state.

If in the case of the publican we do not find Christian ground, where shall we get it? In 2 Cor. 12 where we read of a man in Christ. But it may be said, Surely there is something between the publican and the man in Christ. Nothing whatever. If you have said with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and accepted Christ as your Savior, the next position for you is a man in Christ. There is no halting place, no half-way house, no borderland. If you are not in Christ, you perish. Does anyone dare to say that if you are a man in Christ you will perish? "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.... I and My Father are one." You must not expect to find a declaration of the gospel in the account of the publican. The publican would certainly have been material for the blessing of which we speak, but Christ had not died; the blood had not then been shed.

Is it not a strange thing that people still like that old covert of Adam in the trees of the garden, where they can indeed hear the voice of God, but are not near Him. They prefer shade and distance to nearness and sunshine.

"A man in Christ." This explains it all. If "in Christ," I am out of self. I am looked at by God as having died, having gone under judgment; and ah, dear friends, there will be a resurrection of everything, but not of my sins or of my evil nature. I stand now, not on the merits of Christ, but in Christ. I am in a place of unalterable value. No panic of my wretched heart can cause any fall in the value of Christ. Satan may charge me, my own heart may charge me, but it will not alter the value of Christ. I believe in a peace that nothing in the present - nothing in the future - nothing in the world - nothing in hell

can ever alter. Christ is everything to the Christian. He stands in the simple excellency

oh! who would add to it? - of Christ. The Christian up there is according to the value of Christ; down here he is a poor weak creature.

The eye of God rests with eternal complacency on Christ, and on me because I am in Christ. Faith is no credit to me; as to myself, I am nothing. Paul says of himself, "Though I be nothing"; and if he could say it, you and I may. Is it that the flesh gets any better by the believer breathing the air of heaven? No. As has been said, if taken up into the third heaven, a thorn is added as soon as one comes down again. If this were so with an old saint - a veteran like Paul - what about poor things like ourselves? And sincerity makes it no better. There are no more miserable people in the world than these sincere people. But in Christ, higher you could not be, holier you could not be.

Proverbs 1-8

If you have read the book of Proverbs carefully, you have noticed in the first seven chapters that it says over and over again, "My son," "My son," "My son," because the ordinary channel of wisdom for the family is the parent; but when you come to the 8th chapter, "My son" is left out. Why? It is as if God said, "If your parents don't give you wisdom, here it is." Some Christians have unsaved parents, and perhaps your unsaved parents would like you to be president of a bank, or mayor of a city. Well, you ought to honor your father and mother, and you ought to walk in obedience, but when it comes to the voice of wisdom, you hearken to the voice of God. Open your ear to what wisdom has to say.

A Few Thoughts on Psalm 23 and John 10

Psalm 23 is the sheep speaking about the Shepherd; John 10 is the Shepherd speaking about His sheep. In the former, although the writer was inspired by the Holy Spirit, David's experience of the Shepherd must necessarily have been limited. In the later the Good Shepherd knows all about His sheep perfectly, knows what poor wandering things we are, and in spite of it speaks of our not perishing, and having eternal life! How wonderful! What ample provision He has made for His own!

But there are two negatives in Psalm 23 lying like two precious glittering gems amid all the positive blessings that David enumerates:

shall not want" (v. 1);

"I will fear no evil" (v. 4).

If I do not want in the present, and do not fear for the future, then surely I am in a happy position.

David himself had been a shepherd, and as a king he was called to shepherd Jehovah's people; and he knew something of what it meant. If he could say the Lord is my Shepherd, "I shall not want" was a necessary deduction.

And the careful observer of the two scriptures will be able to trace all the blessings that the Good Shepherd tells us about in John 10, in Psalm 23, perhaps dimly and obscurely, but still there. Not, of course, in all the full light and relationship of Christianity, but still there in a Jewish mold. All this is deeply interesting and instructive and comforting. We can read Psalm 23 in the light of John 10.

Psalm 92:14

In Mark's Gospel there is the account of Jesus choosing twelve men to be His disciples. The Bible says, "And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach." Chap. 3:14. Notice that Jesus chose them that they might first be with Him, and then He sent them forth to preach. To be with Him was fellowship; being sent to preach was service. From this we see that fellowship with God is more important than service, because God desires fellowship before service. Now this may surprise you, but it is God's order. Fellowship with God is even more important than service for God.

The Christian who is crippled with arthritis to the extent that even the slightest move brings a stabbing pain is obviously very limited in what he can do for the Lord. But what about fellowship? Not only can such a person enjoy fellowship with God, but he can also have even richer fellowship now that he is not pressed for time.

A lady in a nursing home recently said, "Years ago I was so busy raising my family, I hardly had time to sit down and read my Bible as I really ought to have read it. Oh, yes, I often read it with my family. We studied it together; we meditated on it in a rather casual way, but we really did not take time to commune with God as we read the Word of God - we failed to really meditate. But now I am retired and I have time on my hands. I begin to enjoy meditating on the Word of God, and now I have wonderful fellowship with God." That dear lady is now bringing greater pleasure to the Lord than she was earlier when her time with God was so limited.

Why does God have this special interest in older people? God wants fellowship with Christians, and many people just do not take the time to meditate and fellowship with Him. But older people, with time on their hands, can enjoy delightful fellowship with the Lord. God enjoys this fellowship with senior citizens who know the Savior, and this is some of the spiritual fruit that God has been looking for and waiting for.

Pull the Plug

I read lately of a town that was supplied with lovely water from a large lake in a mountain, but one day the water stopped. Men went to look if the lake were dry, but found that it was all right, the source was unchanged. Then an anonymous letter was received directing attention to a plug having been put in the supply pipe. That was keeping back the water, and when it was removed the water flowed on as before.

Don't you think sometimes a plug gets into our supply pipe? Ask your own heart what is the plug that has got into your soul's history, and is hindering you from being a real living Christian carrying Christ everywhere, and being a source of blessing to everybody. I desire to ask myself a similar question. Let us take out the plug.

My hand cannot take your plug out; we have to get before the Lord individually that He might remove whatever is hindering the inflow of the living water. "Rivers of living water" are to flow through us to refresh and bless others. How little conception we have of the way the Lord would use us as the channels of communication between Himself and needy souls! It is not a question so much of gift as of spiritual state. Too much is often made of a man with a gift, and saints are putting too much on the shoulders of those possessing gifts. It really is a question of individual devotedness to Christ, and of walking with an ungrieved Spirit. If that be our state, the Lord can use us, for grace is more important than gift.

Redemption Before Holiness

We get in Exod. 15 the deliverance founded on chapter 12; and God takes, as to His dealings, an entirely new character.

In chapter 12 He was a judge, acting in that character, and He is met by the blood. He does not meet the sin; the blood meets the judgment, and He passes over; but the people are left in Egypt, safe from judgment. That is not all that God does; it is the foundation of all blessing, but they had not gotten actual deliverance yet. There is not only the value of what Christ has done meeting the eye of God, but He is active in delivering us and bringing us out.

Christ went down to the condition we were in, and by the grace of God tasted "death for everything." He came into death where Satan's power was. He could not be holden of it, but in coming down He put away the sin. He came down in the power of divine life - He was God Himself - and He not only put away sin, though He did that in order to deliver us, for it could not be done righteously if the sin had not been put away; but now He is up out of it sitting at God's right hand in glory, and the worth of His work is such that it sets man in His Person, but as our Forerunner, in the glory of God. There is complete deliverance for us.

God was a judge in chapter 12. Here in chapter 15 He is a deliverer in virtue of that blood.

The Israelites got to the Red Sea and found they could not go any further, and that is very humbling. It is a much more humbling thing to learn you are without strength than that you are a sinner. God says, Trust Me and go forward. God is a deliverer, and there was this much sea that it protected them on the right hand and on the left. The very thing they dreaded, was deliverance to them; they walked through it. We dread death and judgment, but it is through them we are delivered - the death of Christ.

Then they have to go through the wilderness, but they have come to God first. Death is gain, and judgment is gone for the believer.

He guided them in His strength (when they had none) to His holy habitation. "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself." Then there is peace.

We are brought to God by His power and righteousness, and the life that was manifested in Christ's resurrection from the dead; and from that there is a reckoning on divine strength for the way. Divine power has come in to deliver. Then what is Satan's power? There is perfect present deliverance from Pharaoh and Egypt, and the people are brought to God Himself by God's own strength. Then that work forms the ground for reckoning on God for the rest.

We see in verse 17 that God has an inheritance for His people. We do not have that (the glory) yet; but what we have enables us to reckon on Him for it. He brings us to Himself and now dwells among us, consequent on redemption (see chap. 29:45, 46).

The moment I get there, I say, "Holiness becometh Thine house." You cannot speak of holiness to a person before he is redeemed; he has nothing to do with it except to say he has none. The Lord is "glorious in holiness," and now He has brought a people to Himself and He must have them holy.

In the cleansing of the leper, the blood was to be on the tip of the right ear, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the great toe of the right foot. No thought is to go into our mind, we are to do nothing with our hand, and there is to be nothing in our walk unfit for the blood of Christ.

The Importance of Regular Prayer: Words to Young Christians

Young people, when they come to a certain age, are often disposed gradually to leave off private prayer. They find the old adage true, "Praying will make thee leave sinning, and sinning will make thee leave praying."

It is a sad period in the history of a young person when the early habit of prayer is given up. Then the heart becomes like the garden of the slothful described by Solomon: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns." Pro. 24:30, 31.

There are no good plants thriving in the prayerless soul, but weeds and briars and thorns grow rank and thick, occupying every vacant spot. The stone wall is broken down; there is no defense against the beasts of the field. Every vagrant thought, every vicious passion, finds free admittance. The heart grows hard and the spirit careless. Sin is not dreaded as it once was. The fear of God and the desire of His favor are gone. That youth stands on the edge of a precipice.

I would not have you think, however, that there is any merit in prayer, or that the prayers of one whose "heart is not right in the sight of God" are acceptable to Him. But what I say is that everyone ought to pray to God with a right heart. If your heart is not right with God, then it is wrong, and you are to blame for having it wrong.

I will suppose a case to illustrate what I mean.

You see a child rise up in the morning and go about the house, and though its mother is with it all the time, yet the child neither speaks to her nor seems to notice her at all. After a while the mother asks what is the matter, and why her dear child does not speak to her. The child says, "I have no heart to speak to you, Mother. I do not love you, and so I think it would be wrong for me to speak to you." What would you think of such conduct? You would say, "The child ought to love its mother, and it is only an aggravation of its offense, to carry out the feelings of its heart in its conduct." Would you then have it act the hypocrite, and speak with its lips what it does not feel in its heart? No; but I would have it love its mother, and then act out in its speech and behavior what it feels in its heart. But I would never have it excuse itself from right actions because its heart is wrong. Now, apply this to the subject of prayer, and you will see the character of all such excuses.

If possible, have a particular time and place for prayer where you can be secure from all interruption. At the appointed hours, retire alone and put away all thoughts about your studies, your work, or anything of a worldly nature, and try to realize that God is as truly present as if you saw Him with your bodily eyes. Then read His Word as though you heard Him speak to you in the sacred page; and when your mind has become serious and collected, kneel down and pray to God. Thank Him for every mercy you have received; never forget to confess your sins, and ask for such blessings as you see and feel that you need. Pray also for your friends (and for your enemies, if you have any).

Let me earnestly entreat you to have set times for prayer, at least as often as morning and evening; and never suffer yourself to neglect them. And especially, do not adopt the unseemly practice of praying in bed, but give to God the brightest and best hours of the day, and offer not to Him the blind and the lame for sacrifice. You will find the regular and stated habit of prayer thus formed in early life of great value to you as long as you live.

But let me once more caution you not to trust in your prayers, for they cannot save you; and never think because you are regular and punctual in praying, that you must be a Christian.

Prayer, if sincere and true, will prepare you for engaging in the duties of the day, or for enjoying calm repose at night. You need that calm, tranquil, humble spirit which prayer promotes to prepare you to encounter those things which are constantly trying your feelings, and to enable you to do anything well. Therefore, never engage in anything of importance without first seeking directions of God; and never do anything on which you would be unwilling to ask His blessing.

Romans 6:11

In Rom. 6:11 it is asked, What does reckoning ourselves to be dead to sin mean? There can be no truth of greater importance for the believer to enter into. For it is thus that our deliverance from sin that once held us as its miserable captives is realized practically in the daily life. At the opening of the chapter the Apostle meets by anticipation the opposition of the flesh to the doctrine to which we have been brought at the close of chapter 5, that where sin abounded grace did much more exceedingly abound. So that by the obedience of Christ, brought to its last test and consummated in His death, we that were of the fallen race of Adam have been constituted righteous. This involved that before-God and for faith we have died with Him. Hence the idea that we should continue in sin that grace may abound is abhorrent. We have died to sin instead of living in it is the answer of the Christian; and this was explicitly set forth in the place we took in baptism at the very entrance of our path. We were baptized to His death, buried with Him by baptism unto death, henceforth to be dead to all we once were as having lived in sin.

But the truth of death to sin has to be learned experimentally. That is the significance of the conflict of the soul presented to us at the end of chapter 7. It is the process by which God brings us to the conviction of the hopeless, irremediable evil of the flesh in us. In principle all must go through it who would ever know deliverance from sin's power. I have to learn that there is a total absence of good in me, but light seems to be breaking through the darkness when I realize that there would be no conflict if I had not another nature from God as born again that desires good and hates evil; and I take my place with that nature, and judge that it is not I but sin that dwells in me, but only to find myself perfectly helpless against the evil. In vain I struggle against it, for it struggles against me and overcomes me, till at last, in the bitterness of my soul, I am brought to the necessity of one outside myself to deliver me from myself. The deliverer is near in such a case; I have only to lift my eyes from self to Him and thank God through Jesus Christ.

The principle of the deliverance is then found in chapter 8:3, that God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and, as a sacrifice for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh. Such was the flesh morally that God had to carry out His early sentence upon it, "the end of all flesh is come before Me." It was the only way God could deal with it. No wonder that with all my weary efforts I could make nothing of it. But oh! what rest when the soul is brought to the point of giving up itself as only fit for the judgment of God and then to look back and see that judgment executed in the cross of Christ. It was the death of Him who had become my life, and so I am entitled to count it as mine before God; and death to sin becomes a reality to the soul. We now know that our old man has been crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be brought to naught, and we be its abject slaves no more. That we shall live with Him follows as a blessed inference from our having died 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 unto sin once for all, but in that He liveth He liveth unto God. As come into this world He had to do with sin on every hand and went at last to the cross to be made sin for us.

But such was the perfection of His work when He suffered there for us that He has no more to do with it forever and has only God to be before Him and live to. "Likewise" - that is the wonderful word for us - in like manner as Christ - "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead... unto

sin." Faith reckons with God that we have died to it hi His death and so have no more to do with it, but are alive to God in Christ, free now to live in blessed occupation of heart with Him to God alone.

Not that the flesh has ceased to exist in us or that there is any change in its essential evil; that which is born of the flesh is so characterized to the end; but we reckon by faith that we have died with Christ to it. And how real and blessed is the deliverance thus, from ceaseless occupation with the evil in us leading to no result but of being constantly subjected to its power, to that of being free to be occupied with Christ, in whose death we reckon that we have received our sentence, in whose life that we are alive to God, to breathe the atmosphere of His presence and bring forth fruit unto Him.

Thus it has pleased God to present the great fact of deliverance from the dominion of sin in our death with Christ, that faith may lay hold of it in that which is the sole basis and cause of it; while in chapter 8 we have the full positive resulting liberty, and the Holy Spirit indwelling as the power of our realization of it.

Satan and His Workings

Satan is a fallen creature and he does not possess either omniscience or omnipotence. John 8:44 is a distinct testimony. Many Christians believe that Satan is represented under the figure of the king of Tyrus, in Eze. 28:17, and I think they are right. But Satan has a whole multitude of demons under his authority - so much so that in the poor Gadarene there was a legion. He is the prince of demons.

With respect to the knowledge of thoughts, he does not know them intuitively, as God does; but he knows as ' a spirit full of intelligence and subtlety, who discerns with the greatest clearness the motives of the heart, and who has gained experience by the practice of many thousand years; but I believe that he understands nothing of the power of love. He was able in his malice to raise up the Chaldeans, etc., through the desire of plunder, against Job; but, not in any way knowing the purpose of God to bless him by this means, he did nothing but fulfill it. He did all that he could to get Christ put to death, but he only fulfilled the wonderful purpose of God for our salvation.

However, when he has to do with the evil heart of man, the case is different. He can present objects to awaken lusts. If we reckon ourselves to be dead, dead to sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, he is not able to tempt us; at least, the temptation remains without effect. But if the flesh is not held as dead, then he can present objects which the flesh likes, and suggest to a man the means of satisfying his lusts. Thus he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus for a little money. But man is responsible, because without lust Satan could do nothing; he has nothing to offer to the new man, or if he offers anything, it only produces horror in the soul; the soul suffers as Christ suffered at the sight of evil in this world, or else it overcomes as Christ overcame in the wilderness.

But when the soul is set free, he can indeed insinuate wicked thoughts, and unbelieving thoughts, and words of blasphemy, in such a way that these words and thoughts seem to proceed from the man himself. Nevertheless, if the man is truly converted, we always find that he has a sense of horror at the things that arise in his mind, and we see that they are not really his own thoughts. If he is not converted, he does not distinguish between the demon and himself, as we find in the gospels. But also when he is converted, it is a proof that he has opened the door to the devil by sin - hidden sin it may be - or by negligence.

Further, Satan is the prince of this world, and its god, and he governs the world by means of the passions and lusts of men; and he is able to raise up the whole world against Christians, as he did against Christ, and so try their faith. He can seek to mingle truth and error, and thus deceive Christians if they are not spiritual. He can, as did the demon at Philippi, get Christians mixed up with the world in order to destroy the testimony of God; he can change himself into an angel of light, but the spiritual man discerns all things (1 Cor. 2:15; J.N.D. Trans.). Satan has little power over us if we walk humbly, close to the Lord, following faithfully the Word of God, having Christ as the only Object of the heart. Satan knows well that he has been conquered; therefore it is said, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." His influence in the world is very great through the

motives of the human heart, and he acts on men through each other; likewise, from the rapidity of his operations and actions, he appears to be everywhere; and then he employs a great multitude of servants who are all wicked. But in fact he is not present everywhere. Now God is really present, and if we are under the influence of the Spirit of God, and the conscience is in the presence of God, Satan has no power. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." However things may be with us, if we are truly the children of God, he will fulfill the counsels of God with respect to us; it may be, if need be, by chastisement. But God knows all things; He in the most absolute sense penetrates everywhere. He orders all things - Satan's efforts even - for our good. If we are armed with the whole armor of God, the darts of the evil one do not reach the soul.

Saul, David, Jonathan: History of Three People

1 Samuel

This deeply interesting book gives us an eventful period in the history of Israel. The sad page recorded in the book of Judges has led to a change in the ways of God toward them. After the successive relapses which always followed the deliverances of the judges, God was pleased to raise up Samuel who commenced the line of prophets by whom God addressed Himself to the consciences of the people with a view to recall their hearts to Him; and the prophet henceforward superseded the priest as the medium of divine communication, in consequence of the utter failure of the priesthood in the person and family of Eli.

Another change too takes place ere long in the mode of government of the people; namely, the anointing of a king. Hitherto God had kept the immediate government in His own hands; but the people, restless and dissatisfied - always ready to complain at the ways of divine goodness - ask for a king that they may be like the nations around. Alas! they had lost the sense of what Jehovah was to them, and of their own peculiar calling, or they never would have coveted to be like the surrounding nations. But the Lord, who always answers faith, is pleased at times to answer unbelief as well, as in the case of the quails; and so here He gives them their desire and sets over them Saul the son of Kish, the man of their desire, and who was so soon to represent the actual state of their hearts.

Raised by God to a position of dignity and honor. Saul sits upon the throne of Israel, the head and representative of the people. But what is his conduct in this place? Object of divine favor, he disobeys the word of the Lord who had blessed him, and by disobedience forfeits all. Chapter 15 records his fall; and Samuel, who had been the instrument of his anointing, is now sent to express God's judgment. "And Samuel said unto Saul,... thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." v. 26.

But no sooner have we this rejection and judgment of the disobedient man, than we read (chap. 16:1): "And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided Me a king among his sons." This shows us that God has counsels, and provisions by which to accomplish them, entirely outside and independent of the fallen and disobedient man. There is one of whom it is written, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfill all My will." And a little lower down in chapter 16 we have the anointing of this chosen one, his setting apart for the great mission of fulfilling God's will.

In chapter 17 the scene is changed. Israel with its fallen king stands face to face with the Philistines and their champion, Goliath of Gath; and all the host, from Saul the king to the meanest soldier, are full of fear and trembling; and none dare meet the foe, for God is not with them, and they have no confidence toward Him, as the Apostle John speaks, "If our heart condemn us not,

then have we confidence toward God." No; their heart did condemn them, and moreover God was against them in judgment. The Philistines were His scourge for Israel's unfaithfulness; otherwise, none of the inhabitants of the land could have stood before Israel. Who now can be for them when Gad, their only refuge, is against them?

Now comes the occasion for unfolding and accomplishing the purposes of His grace. From the solitude of the sheepfold David is called by God to fulfill the great object for which he was anointed; and, as the obedient one, at his father's bidding, he carries the message to the camp. There he discovers the terrible strait of the people, and impelled by holy zeal and fearless faith, he voluntarily offers to meet the dreaded foe singlehanded. With a fixed heart and a firm step he descends the valley alone to grapple with the power of the enemy, and returns victorious, carrying back the giant's head - witness of his triumph. It is worthy of notice here that while it is God's judgment that lay on the people for their sin and disobedience, it is God alone who can raise up and send the one who could meet that judgment and deliver the people from under it. Nothing is now left but for Israel to pursue and gather up the spoil.

One more word as to the type. When David returned from the conquest, all Israel celebrated his praise and then hastened for the spoil. But in chapter 18 we have something as instructive as it is beautiful. Another heart and eye had watched with deepest interest the stripling David go forth alone to the conflict. Tremblingly he had marked each step; and when David returned with the witness of his victory, what characterized Jonathan was not so much elation at the victory as that his heart was arrested by the person of the one who had achieved it; and as he meditated on him, his affections were drawn out toward David. The thought of one who, unknown and unasked, could step into that terrible breach and face all the power of the enemy for him, so deeply affected him that it is said, "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." This draws him near to David to seek his acquaintance, and the nearer he draws the more his heart is attached, for he finds his love responded to by his benefactor, and so they make a covenant together.

Jonathan feels he would like to unite his interests with those of David; he wished to have nothing separate from him; and if he had anything, as the king's son, which distinguished him in the eyes of others, he stripped it from him to adorn David, "even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." David evidently had not only won a victory over Jonathan's enemy, but also over Jonathan's heart, whose object now is to exalt his benefactor in the eyes of others. If we turn to Philippians we find a man in a very similar state, for Paul had been so captivated by the glory of the Person of his Savior, that he drops everything that once distinguished him in the eyes of others (chap. 3), and declares (chap. 1) that his earnest expectation and hope are that- Christ may be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death.

May the Holy Spirit, whose mission it is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, so present Him to our hearts that we may be like Jonathan in this first attachment to David, but unlike him when he left his despised and rejected friend and savior, and preferred the ease and comfort of his palace home, but only to perish with his disobedient father on Mount Gilboa.

Seek Ye My Face

Psalm 27:1-8; Rev. 22:4, 5; John 17:24

How blessed that the Lord Himself has become our "Light." He is not often so presented in the Old Testament. We could not have borne it unless His love had been revealed with it; hence it comes out more in the New Testament. The One who has become our Light, with the necessary exposure of all our ruin, has also become our "Salvation." When that is so, we can say, "Whom shall I fear?" All the exercise that the heart is brought into finds its answer here; He is "the strength of my life" so we can be fearless before the foe. We have confidence and boldness.

It is just this that made me turn to this Psalm - "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after." It is undividedness of heart that comes out here. "ONE thing": what is it? "that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life": not merely when I go to heaven. His presence has become the sanctuary of our hearts. Unhindered access has been opened to us. There is no veil now. We may in spirit dwell there now, "to behold the beauty of the LORD." He had not yet been revealed when these words were written; He had not yet assumed the form of a servant. His face, once more marred than that of any man, is now radiant with the glory of God. We know Him. But no visible form could have been before the psalmist as he uttered these words. But we know what he spoke of anticipatively. Once we saw no beauty in Him that we should desire Him; but now He is the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely. How far are our hearts dwelling in His presence, beholding His beauty, and inquiring in His temple, with a deepening entering into His mind?

"That will I seek after." We desire it, and perhaps we seek it in prayer in the morning, but soon forget it. We often fail to seek in the energy of faith what we have desired of the Lord.

And now look at verse 5: "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me." How often we need trouble to recover our hearts to the Lord. But it was not trouble that led the psalmist to seek the Lord. He sought Him for His own sake, and then when trouble did come, it finds him hid in the innermost part of His pavilion, in all the intimacy of the home-circle with Him.

I think especially of those who are young. What an encouragement it is to find God coming in to confirm us in our desires to seek Him. "Seek ye My face," He says. It is sweet to Him that we should seek Him. What a compensation for the soul that knows what it is to be set on this one thing, to be in His presence beholding His beauty. He satisfies the longing soul. He creates the longing that He may satisfy it. And with the satisfying comes a capacity for deeper longing. It is blessed to know what it is to have these divinely created longings. It is thus He carries on the growth of our souls.

Rev. 22 leads us on to the fulfillment of it all. The subject has been, in chapter 21, the manifested glory of the Church, His bride, in the kingdom, when we shall share His glory. But now it goes on to this - "They shall see His face." That is not manifested glory; that belongs to the intimacy of divine

affections. There is where He fixes our gaze.

In John 17:22 and 23 He speaks of the manifested glory, "the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them," etc. All that will be manifested when the astonished world will see us displayed in the same glory as Christ. But something more is needed for His heart: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory." This is not for the purpose of display. It is what He bring us into to satisfy His own heart; and it will satisfy our deepest longings.

His word for us now is "Seek ye My face"; that is what He is going to bring us into in eternity.

O let us undistractedly desire this one thing and seek after it - "that I may dwell in the house of the LORD," beholding His glory.

Self-Judgment

I do not believe true self-judgment ever stops at the act which necessitates it. About the act, it may be, there can be but one judgment; namely, that it was utterly wrong, unjustifiable, and inexcusable. But how came the act to be committed? It was not committed while the soul was walking in the presence of God, but when not so walking. The act itself, therefore, is but the index of a previous departure. The moment the soul is out of God's presence the door is open for the action of that flesh which is within - Satan works, the flesh acts, and practice dishonoring to God is the result.

Self-judgment, therefore, when true, pauses not at the act, though taking full cognizance of it, nor at the opening of the door which led to the act, though marking that likewise most fully. It goes back to the point of departure from the presence of God which led to the opening of the door for flesh's action, however far back that may be; and it is not thorough until that point has been reached and confessed before God.

As the word itself implies, it is self (not "act") judgment. Then the question arises, Who is the "self" upon whom this judgment is exercised? It is sometimes thought it is on the old man, the old nature that is in the believer; but I do not think so. I doubt its being correct to speak of self-judgment (in the sense in which we now speak of it) as being the judgment of the old Adam nature that is in me; that, if I am a believer and have known redemption, I have already accepted God's judgment about, both as to its character and deserts, recognizing by faith its judicial end in God's judgment of it on the cross, where sin in the flesh was condemned. This judgment is, or ought to be, a forever settled matter.

Before that full redemption was known by the soul, the old Adam nature did for that soul constitute "myself" according to the judgment of conscience; but for the believer who knows and enjoys redemption, it no longer does so. I doubt, therefore, the correctness of the statement that self-judgment by the believer is his judgment of the old Adam nature that is in him. A believer, in the sense in which I now use the term, is one who has a new nature as being born of God, has Christ as his life, is a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and has the Spirit of God dwelling in him. He has, no doubt, still the old nature within; but, as I have written, his settled judgment of that is that it is utterly bad, so much so that God has already dealt judicially with it on the cross.

In this new relationship in which he has been set, in this new nature and life he has been given, the believer is responsible to manifest the characteristics of the nature he has from God, and the relationship in which he is set with God. If I, as a believer, have failed to do this, and have manifested the old nature, the flesh, who has failed? Not the old nature, for it never was responsible for this (I mean this manifestation of new nature, divine life); and upon whom is self-judgment to be exercised? Not on the old Adam, for its action has been quite consistent with its own character. Who then has failed? Who is to exercise self judgment? and upon whom is he to exercise it?

"I," the responsible believer, have failed; "I," the responsible believer, have to exercise self judgment; and upon "myself," the responsible believer, have I to exercise it.

In a word, I do not judge the bad nature and character which I have manifested, putting the blame on it (that nature and character I have through grace a fixed judgment about); but I judge "myself," a believer who has not only failed to manifest the character I ought, but has manifested a very different one.

Such I believe to be self-judgment, such the person who exercises it, and such the person or individual on whom it is exercised. It is not an old Adam nature we have to judge when it has acted, it is ourselves, believers, we have to judge for having opened the door to that old nature so that it could act.

There is, I believe, great comfort, and not only comfort but positive power for exercising self judgment thoroughly when this is seen; for in thus judging oneself, one does it with the consciousness that one is passing judgment on an individual (a believer) on whom God has no judgment to pass, save in a governmental sense, and then only with a view to produce that judgment of self which may have been neglected.

Self-Surrender: Part 1

It is perfectly delightful to contemplate the moral triumphs of Christianity the victories which it gains over self and the world, and the marvelous way in which such victories are obtained. The law said, Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that. But Christianity speaks a totally different language. In it we see life bestowed as a free gift life flowing down from a risen and glorified Christ. This is something entirely beyond the range of the law. The language of the law was, "The man which doeth those things shall live by them." Rom. 10:5. Long life in the land was all the law proposed to the man who could keep it. Eternal life in a risen Christ was something utterly unknown and unthought of under the legal system.

But Christianity not only gives eternal life, it gives also an object with which that life can be occupied - a center around which the affections of that life can circulate - a model on which that life can be formed. Thus it gains its mighty moral triumphs. Thus it gains its conquests over a selfish nature and a selfish world. It gives divine life and a divine center; and as the life moves around that center we are taken out of self.

This is the secret of self-surrender. It cannot be reached in any other way. The unconverted man finds his center in self; and hence, to tell him not to be selfish is to tell him not to be at all. This holds true even in the matter of mere religiousness. A man will attend to his religion in order, as he thinks, to promote his eternal interest, but this is quite a different thing from finding an object and a center outside himself. Christianity alone can supply these. The gospel of the grace of God is the only thing that can effectually meet man's need and deliver him from the selfishness which belongs to him. The unrenewed man lives for himself. He has no higher object. The life which he possesses is alienated from the life of God. He is away from God. He moves around another center altogether, and until he is born again, until he is renewed, regenerated, born of the Word and Spirit of God, it cannot be otherwise. Self is his object, his center in all things. He may be moral, amiable, religious, benevolent, but until he is converted, he is not finished with himself as to the ground of his being or as to the center around which that being revolves.

The foregoing train of thought naturally introduces us to the striking and beautiful illustration of our theme afforded in Phil. 2 In it we have a series of examples of self-surrender, commencing with a divinely perfect One, the Lord Himself.

But, ere we proceed to gaze upon this exquisite picture, it may be well to inquire what it was that rendered it needful to present such a picture before the Philippian saints. The attentive reader will doubtless observe, in the course of this most charming epistle, certain delicate touches from the inspired pen leading to the conclusion that the keen and vigilant eye of the Apostle detected a certain root of evil in the bosom of the beloved and cherished assembly gathering at Philippi. To this he addressed himself, not with a sledge hammer or long whip, but with a refinement and delicacy far more powerful than either the one or the other. The mightiest moral results are reached by those delicate touches from the hand of God the Holy Ghost.

But what was the root to which we have referred? It was not a splitting into sects and parties, as at Corinth. It was not a return to law and ritualism, as at Galatia. It was not a hankering after philosophy and the rudiments of the world, as at Colosse. What was it then? It was a root of envy and strife. The sprouting of this root is seen very distinctly in the collision between those two sisters, Euodias and Syntyche (chap. 4:2); but it is glanced at in earlier portions of the epistle, and a divine remedy supplied.

It is a great point with a medical man not only to understand what is wrong with his patient, but also to understand the true remedy. Some physicians are clever in discovering the root of the disease, but they do not know so well what remedy to apply. Others again are skilled in the knowledge of medicine, the powers of various drugs, but they do not know how to apply them to individual cases. The divine Physician knows both the disease and its remedy. He knows exactly what is the matter with us, and He knows what will do us good. He sees the root of the matter, and He applies a radical cure. He does not treat cases superficially. He is perfect in diagnosis. He does not guess at our disease from mere surface symptoms. His keen eye penetrates at once to the very bottom of the case, and His skillful hand applies the true remedy.

This it is in the epistle to the Philippians. These saints held a very large place in the heart of the Apostle. He loved them much, and they loved him. Again and again he speaks in grateful accents of their fellowship with him in the gospel from the very first. But all this did not and could not shut his eyes to what was wrong among them. It is said that love is blind. In one sense we look upon this saying as a libel upon love. If it was said that love is superior to faults, it would be nearer the truth. What would anyone give for blind love? Of what use would it be to be loved by one who only loved us because he was ignorant of our blots and blemishes? If it be meant that love will not see our blots, it is blessedly true (Numb. 23:21); but no one would care for a love that was not at once aware of and superior to our failures and infirmities.

Paul loved the saints at Philippi, and rejoiced in their love to him, and tasted the fragrant fruit of that love again and again. But then he saw that it was one thing to love and be kind to a distant apostle, and quite another thing to agree among themselves. Doubtless Euodias and Syntyche both contributed to send a present to Paul, though they were not pulling harmoniously together in the wear and tear of daily life and service. This is, alas, no uncommon case. Many sisters and brothers too are ready to contribute of their substance to help some distant servant of Christ, and yet they do not walk pleasantly together. How is this? There is a lack of self-surrender. This, we may rest assured, is the real secret of much of the "strife" and "vainglory" so painfully manifest in the very midst of the people of God. It is one thing to walk alone, and it is another thing to walk in company with our brethren in the practical recognition of that great truth of the unity of the body, and in the remembrance that "we are members one of another." Christians are not to regard themselves as mere individuals, as isolated atoms, as independent persons. This cannot be, seeing that Scripture declares, "There is one body," and we are members thereof. This is a divine truth - a grand fact - a positive reality. We are not to be like the hairs of an electrified broom, each standing out in lonely individuality. We are living members of a living body, each one having to do with other members with whom we are connected by a bond which no power of earth or hell can sever. In a word, there is a relationship formed by the presence of the Holy Spirit, who not only dwells in each individual member, but is the power of the unity of the one body. It is the presence of God the Spirit in the Church that constitutes that Church the one living body of the living Head.

Now it is when we are called to walk in the actual acknowledgment of this great truth that there is a demand for self-surrender. If we were merely solitary individuals treading each in his own self-chosen path, carrying out his own peculiar thoughts, walking in the sparks of his own kindling, pursuing his own peculiar line of things, indulging his own will, then indeed a quantity of self might be retained. If Euodias and Syntyche could have walked alone, there would have been no collision - no strife. But they were called to walk together, and here was the demand for self-surrender.

And be it ever remembered that Christians are not members of a club, or of a sect, or of an association; they are members of a body, each connected with all, and all connected by the fact of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit with the risen and glorified Head in heaven.

This is an immense truth, and the practical carrying out of it will cost us not only all we have, but all we are. There is no place in all the universe where self will be so pulled to pieces as in the assembly of God. And is it not well? Is it not a powerful truth of the divine ground on which that assembly is gathered? Are we not - should we not be - glad to have our hateful self thus pulled to pieces? Shall we - ought we to - run away from those who do it for us? Are we not glad - do we not often pray - to get rid of self? And shall we quarrel with those who are God's instruments in answering our prayers? True, they may do the work roughly and clumsily, but no matter for that. Whoever helps me to crush and sink self does me a kind turn, however awkwardly he may do it. One thing is certain, no man can ever rob me of that which, after all, is the only thing worth having; namely, Christ. This is a precious consolation. Let self go; we shall have more of Christ. Euodias may lay the blame on Syntyche, and Syntyche on Euodias; the Apostle does not raise the question of which was right or of which was wrong, but he beseeches both to be "of the same mind in the Lord."

Here lies the divine secret. It is self-surrender. But this must be a real thing. There is no use in talking about sinking self while, at the same time, self is fed and patted on the back. We sometimes pray with marvelous fervor to be enabled to trample self in the dust, and the very next moment, if anyone seems to cross our path, self is like a porcupine with all its quills up. This will never do. God will have us real, and surely we can say, with all our weakness and folly, we want to be real - real in everything - and therefore real when we pray for the power of self-surrender. But most assuredly there is no place where there is more urgent demand for this lovely grace than in the bosom of the assembly of God.

Self-Surrender: Part 2

We may range through the wide domain of inspiration and not find a more exquisite model of self-surrender than that which is presented to us in the opening lines of Phil. 2 It is, we may safely say, impossible for anyone to breathe the holy atmosphere of such a scripture and not be cured of the sore evils of envy and jealousy, strife and vainglory. Let us approach the marvelous picture and, gazing intently upon it, seek to catch its inspiration.

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." vv. 1-8.

Here then is the divine remedy for envy and jealousy, strife and vainglory - for self-occupation, in short, in all its hideous forms. The inspired penman introduces to our hearts the self-emptied, humble, obedient Man, Christ Jesus.

Here was One who possessed all power in heaven and earth. Divine majesty and glory belonged to Him. He was God over all, blessed forever. By Him all things were made, and by Him they subsist. And yet He appeared in this world as a poor man - a servant - one who had not where to lay His head. The foxes and the fowls, the creatures of His formation, were better provided for than He their Maker. They had a place to rest in. He had none. He "made Himself of no reputation." He never thought of Himself at all. He thought of others, cared for them, labored for them, wept for them, ministered to them, but He never did a thing for Himself. We never find Him taking care to supply Himself with anything. His was a life of perfect self-surrender. He who was everything, made Himself nothing. He stood in perfect contrast with the first Adam, who, being but a man, thought to make himself like God, and became the serpent's slave. The Lord Jesus, who was the Most High God, took the very lowest place among men. It is utterly impossible that any man can ever take so low a place as Jesus. The word is, He "made Himself of no reputation." He went so low that no one could possibly put Him lower. He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

And be it observed that the cross is here viewed as the consummation of a life of obedience - the completion of a work of self surrender. It is what we may call, to use a Levitical term, the burnt offering aspect of the death of Christ, rather than the sin offering. True it is - most blessedly true - that the selfsame act which consummated a life of obedience, did also put away sin; but in the passage now before us, sin-bearing is not so much the thought as self-surrender. Jesus gave up all. He veiled His glory and came down into this poor world; and when He came, He eschewed all

human pomp and grandeur, and became a poor man. His parents were poor. They were only able to procure the lowest grade of sacrifice which the law admitted for the poor - not a bullock, not a lamb, but a pair of turtledoves. (Compare Lev. 15:29 and Luke 2:24.) He Himself worked, and was known as a carpenter. Nor are we to miss the moral force of this fact by saying that every Jew was brought up to some trade. Our Lord Jesus Christ did really take a low place. The very town where He was brought up was a proverb of reproach. He was called the "Nazarene." And it was asked with a sneer of contempt, "Is not this the carpenter?" He was a root out of a dry ground. He had no form nor comeliness, no beauty in man's eye. He was the despised, neglected, self-emptied, meek and lowly Man from first to last. He gave up all, even to life itself. In a word, His self-surrender was complete.

And now mark the result. "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." The blessed Lord Jesus took the very lowest place, but God has given Him the very highest. He made Himself nothing, but God has made Him everything. He said, "I am a worm, and no man"; but God has set Him as Head over all. He went into the very dust of death, but God has placed Him on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

What does all this teach us? It teaches us that the way to go up is to go down. This is a grand lesson and one which we much need to learn. It would effectually deliver us from envy and jealousy, from strife and vainglory, from self-importance and self-occupation. God will assuredly exalt those who in the spirit and mind of Christ take the low place; and, on the other hand, He will as assuredly abase those who seek to be somebody.

O to be nothing! This is true liberty, true happiness, true moral elevation. And then what intense power of attraction in one who makes nothing of himself! And, on the other hand, how repulsive is a pushing, forward, elbowing, self exalting spirit! How utterly unworthy of one bearing the name of Him who made Himself of no reputation. May we not set it down as a fixed truth that ambition cannot possibly live in the presence of the One who emptied Himself? No doubt. An ambitious Christian is a flagrant contradiction.

But there are other examples of self-surrender presented to us in this exquisite Phil. 2 - inferior no doubt to the divine model at which we have been gazing; for in this, as in all other things, Jesus must have the pre-eminence. Still, though inferior and imperfect, they are deeply interesting and valuable to us. Look at Paul. See how deeply he had drunk into his Master's spirit of self-surrender. Harken to the following accents from one who naturally would have allowed none to outstrip him in his career of ambition. "Yes," he says, "and if I be offered [poured forth as a drink offering] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all." v. 17.

This is uncommonly fine. Paul was ready to be nothing - to be spent - to be poured forth as a libation upon the Philippians' sacrifice. It mattered not to him who presented the sacrifice, or who performed the service, provided the thing was done. Does this not cause some of us to blush? How little do we know of this excellent spirit! How prone we are to attach importance to work if we ourselves have anything to do with it. How little able to joy and rejoice with others in their sacrifice and service! Our work, our preaching, our writings, have an interest in our view quite different from those of anyone else. In a word, self, self, detestable self, creeps in even in that which seems to

be the service of Christ. We are drawn to those who think well of us and our work, and retire from those who think otherwise. All this needs to be judged. It is unlike Christ, and unworthy of those who bear His holy name. Paul had so learned Christ as to be able to rejoice in the work and service of others as well as in his own; and even where Christ was preached of contention, he could rejoice.

Then again, look at Paul's son, Timothy. Hearken to the glowing testimony borne to him by the pen of inspiration. "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." vv. 19-22.

Here was self-surrender. Timothy genuinely cared for the saints, and that too at a moment when all sought their own things. And yet, dear as Timothy was to Paul's heart - valuable as such a self-denying servant must have been to him in the work of the gospel - he was willing to part with him for the sake of the Church. Timothy, likewise, was willing to be separated from his invaluable friend and father in the faith in order to ease his anxious mind in reference to the state of the Philippians. This was indeed giving proof of real devotedness and self-surrender. Timothy did not talk of these things; he practiced them. He did not make a parade of his doings; but Paul, by the Holy Spirit, engraved them on a tablet from which they can never be erased. This was infinitely better. Let another praise thee and not thyself. Timothy made nothing of himself, but Paul made a great deal of him. This is divine. The sure way to get up is to go down. Such is the law of the heavenly road. A man who makes much of himself saves others the trouble of doing so. There is no possible use in two persons doing the same thing. Self-importance is a noxious weed nowhere to be found in the entire range of the new creation. It is, alas! often found in the ways of those who profess to belong to that blessed and holy creation, but it is not of heavenly growth. It is of fallen nature - a weed that grows luxuriantly in the soil of this world. The men of this age think it laudable to push and make way for themselves. A bustling, self-important, pretentious style takes with the children of this generation. But our heavenly Master was the direct opposite to all this. He who made the worlds stooped to wash a disciple's feet (John 13); and if we are like Him, we shall do the same. There is nothing more foreign to the thoughts of God, the mind of heaven, the spirit of Jesus, than self-importance and self-occupation. And, on the other hand, there is nothing that savors so of God, of heaven, and of Jesus, as self-surrender.

Look once more, reader, at our picture in Phil. 2. Examine with special care that figure which occupies a very prominent place. It is Epaphroditus. Who was he? Was he a great preacher, a very eloquent speaker, a pre-eminently gifted brother? We are not told. But this we are told - and told powerfully and touchingly - he was one who exhibited a lovely spirit of self-surrender. This is better than all the gifts and eloquence, power and learning, that could possibly be concentrated in any single individual. Epaphroditus was one of that illustrious class who seek to make nothing of themselves; and, as a consequence, the inspired Apostle spares no pains to exalt him. Hear how he expatiates upon the actings of this singularly attractive personage. "Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants."

What a cluster of dignities! What a brilliant array of titles! How little did this dear and unpretending servant of Christ imagine that he was to have such a monument erected to his memory! But the Lord will never suffer the fruits of self-sacrifice to wither, nor the name of the self-emptied to sink into oblivion. Hence it is that the name of one who otherwise might never have been heard of shines on the page of inspiration as the brother, companion, and fellow soldier of the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

But what did this remarkable man do? Did he spend a princely fortune in the cause of Christ?

We are not told, but we are told what is far better - he spent himself. This is the grand point for us to seize and ponder. It was not the surrender of his fortune merely, but the surrender of himself. Let us hearken to the record concerning one of the true David's mighty men. "He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness." Why? Was it because he was sick? because of his pains, and aches, and privations? Nothing of the sort. Epaphroditus did not belong to the generation of whiners and complainers. He was thinking of others. "He... was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick." How lovely! He was occupied about the Philippians and their sorrow about him. The only thing that affected him in his illness was the thought of how it would affect them. Perfectly exquisite! This honored servant of Christ had brought himself to death's door to serve others; and when there, in place of being occupied about himself and his ailments, he was thinking of the sorrows of others. "He was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

Can anything be morally more beautiful than this? It is one of the rarest pictures ever presented to the human eye. This is Epaphroditus, nigh unto death for the sake of others, but he is full of sorrow about the Philippians; and the Philippians are full of sorrow about him; Paul is full of sorrow about both, and God comes and mingles Himself with the scene and, in mercy to all, raises up the loved one from the bed of death.

And then mark the tender solicitude of the blessed Apostle. It is like some tender mother sending her darling son away and committing him, with fond earnestness, in the care of some friend. "I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation." Why? Was it because of his gifts, his rank, or his wealth? No, but because of his self-surrender. "Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me." O dear Christian reader, let us think on these things. We have introduced you to a picture and we leave you to gaze upon it. The grouping is divine. There is a moral line running through the entire scene and linking the figures into one striking group. It is like the anointing of the true Aaron, and the oil flowing down to the skirts of his garments. We have the blessed Lord, perfect in His self-surrender, as in all beside; and then we have Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, each in his measure exhibiting the rare and lovely grace of self-surrender.

Service

Connect your service with nothing but God - not with any particular set of persons. You may be comforted by fellowship, and your heart refreshed; but you must work by your individual faith and energy, without leaning on any one whatever; for if you do, you cannot be a faithful servant. Service must be measured by faith, and one's own communion with God. Saul even may be a prophet when he gets among the prophets, but David was always the same - in the cave or anywhere. While the choicest blessings given me here are in fellowship, yet a man's service must flow from personal communion, else there will be weakness. If I have the word of wisdom, I must use it for the saint who may seek my counsel. It is "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." But also, "Let every one prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."

There is no single place grace brings us into but is a place of temptation, and that we cannot escape, though we shall be helped through. In every age, 'the blessing has been from individual agency, and the moment it has ceased to be this, it has declined into the world. 'Tis humbling, but it makes us feel that all comes immediately from God. The tendency of association is to make us lean upon one another.

When there are great arrangements for carrying on work, there is not the recognition of this inherent blessing, which "tarrieth not for the sons of men." I don't tarry for man, if I have faith in God; I act upon the strength of that. Let a man act as the Lord leads him.

The Spirit of God is not to be fettered by man. All power arises from the direct authoritative energy of the Holy Ghost in the individual. Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13) were sent forth by the Holy Ghost, recommended to the grace of God by the Church, at Antioch; but they had no communication with it till they returned, but then there was the joyful concurrence of love in the service that had been performed. He that had talents went and traded. Paul says, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." Where there is a desire to act accompanied by real energy, a man will rise up and walk, but if he cannot do this the energy is not there, and the attempt to move is only restlessness and weakness. Love for Jesus sets one to work; I know no other way.

The Shadow and the Substance

Read Lev. 8-10

"All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me." Luke 24:44.

The 8th, 9th, and 10th chapters of Leviticus should be read together as forming one connected subject. Aaron enters upon his office of high priest as the type of the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest (Heb. 5:1-7).

We then have a history of what was done during the eight following days, which are divided into two periods; the first seven days forming one period, and the eighth day another.

The first seven days were occupied with Aaron and the sons of Aaron; but the eighth day is taken up with Aaron, the sons of Aaron, and all the congregation.

For the first seven days the glory of the Lord did not appear; but on the eighth day the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people.

For the first seven days the sons of Aaron were at the door of the tabernacle; but on the eighth day, they were brought into the tabernacle.

We can learn, in the Lord's mercy, what the Holy Spirit signified by these things which were the shadows of good things to come. The sons of Aaron, few in number compared with all the congregation, represent the little flock of the Church of God.

The blessing of the sons of Aaron was very peculiar. The whole congregation were left at a distance until the eighth day, but the sons of Aaron were brought to the door of the tabernacle for the entire seven days, to be there day and night. So now the world is at a distance from God, and lying in the wicked one; but believers in Christ are brought nigh through His blood, being reconciled to God through the death of His Son. God deals not with them as with the world, but is gathering them out of it.

The sons of Aaron were not dressed like all the congregation, but were dressed like Aaron. Even so we are called not to be like the world, but to imitate Christ. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Rom. 13:14.

But on the eighth day we read of other things. The eighth day is the first day of the week. It was on the first day of the week that the Lord arose, as the first fruits of them that sleep. They that are Christ's will be raised at His coming (1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

On the eighth day sacrifices were offered for all the congregation, as well as for Aaron and the sons of Aaron. In this we see how the whole creation will be delivered when the Lord comes to usher in the millennial period at the close of the tribulation (Rom. 8:21). The blessing of the one offering of Christ, once for all, will be universally known and enjoyed in that day, when the creation

shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:21); and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9).

On the eighth day the promise was made, "Today the LORD will appear unto you"; and again, "The glory of the LORD shall appear unto you." But before the glory appeared, two things were done: 1) the sacrifices were all offered; 2)

Moses and Aaron then went into the tabernacle. The Lord Jesus Christ has done these two things, as we read in Heb. 9:11, 12: "But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." The atonement has been made, and Christ has entered into the holy place.

Moses and Aaron next came out of the tabernacle; and when they came out, the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. We wait to see this fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ; for the Scripture says, "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Heb. 10:37. And again the promise is given, "He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:20, 21.

The Apostle Paul explains this type, and connects these three acts of Christ: 1) the offering; 2) the going into the holy place; 3) the coming out. He marks the first two as fulfilled, and the third as unfulfilled. "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: nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Heb. 9:24-28.

He is entered into the holy place. He was once offered. He shall appear the second time. This connection is full of comfort, for why was Christ once offered? To bear the sins of many. And what is Christ doing in the holy place? He is appearing there in the presence of God for us. All whose hearts know this are believers; and, as mentioned above, after the Lord's coming for the Church and at the conclusion of the tribulation period, He will come again to be admired in all them that believe (2 Thess. 1:10).

It is the effort of Satan to make a believer afraid that the Lord Jesus Christ should come back very speedily, but a believer has nothing to fear when He comes; the one offering has settled everything. His coming will be a time of great joy. It is also the effort of Satan to hinder a believer from loving the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, because that will be the day of the believer's glory before the world. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Col. 3:4.

If we do not believe that Jesus has delivered us from the wrath to come, then of course we ought to be afraid of the wrath to come and, therefore, to be afraid that the Lord should come; but if we believe that Jesus Christ has died for sinners, we may believe that He died for us. And if we believe that any of our sins are pardoned, we may believe that they are all pardoned. The gospel is indeed glad tidings of great joy. It is very simple, but Satan tries to corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ. May the Lord give His children full confidence in His great love.

This is of great importance, because of the numbers who appear among the children of God, who really have no faith at all. Of the ten virgins who all took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom, five were foolish and without oil; of the two men in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left; and of the four sons of Aaron, two were cut off and two were brought into blessing.

But why were two of the sons of Aaron cut off? Because they took not the fire for their censers from off the altar on which the fat that was burned sent up a sweet savor unto the Lord; and they burned their incense with a strange fire which the Lord commanded them not. They knew not the value of the burnt offering, the efficacy of which was to enter the holiest (a type of the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ); and therefore the fire from the Lord devoured them.

The Lord showed His value for the burnt offering when the fire came down from the Lord and consumed it on the altar; but He showed His indignation at any other way of approaching Him, as when the fire came out from the Lord and devoured Nadab and Abihu, for offering strange fire which the Lord commanded them not to offer.

The same thing was shown in the offering of Cain and Abel. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord; Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and to His offering He had not respect (Gen. 4:4, 5). The Lord valued the offerer according to His value of the offering. How great then must His value be for a poor worthless sinner, whose offering is the Lord Jesus Christ! for Scripture says, "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor." Eph. 5:2.

Some Better Thing

Heb. 11:39, 40

There are three things alluded to in these verses that claim our attention. The promise not received by those spoken of in the chapter; "some better thing" for us; and our being perfected together in resurrection. First, as to the promise. The great principle of faith as the power of the just man's life had been wonderfully illustrated in those who had gone before, and that in a great variety of testing circumstances. For like those addressed in the epistle, they had not received - that is, enjoyed possession of - what had been promised them. Even if the patriarch's faith went beyond the promise, and looked for the city which hath foundations, that God had prepared for them, they had not entered into it; it has not come yet. God would not bring them into their promised portion without us. They, like us, had to live by the faith of it.

But meanwhile some better thing had been foreseen by God for us. It is not the object of the epistle to develop this better thing in all its extent, for it does not bring out the Church's place as united to Christ in glory. But the heavens are opened now to faith as they were not to them; and Christ who has passed into the heavens has become the present Object of faith, having taken His place there, on the ground of accomplished redemption. Thus heavenly things are revealed as the present portion of Christians. Our citizenship is there. God has come out of the thick darkness of Sinai, in the full revelation of Himself in the Son, and we have unhindered access to Him in the sanctuary of His presence by the perfect work of the Son of God. All this wonderful place of privilege belongs to the calling of the Christian, that is, to those called in this time of Christ's rejection from the earth, as it did not belong to saints before He came and died and rose again.

If it be remembered that Christ is in the heavenly glory, and the Holy Spirit came down from it to dwell in the believers and unite us to Him there, the difference between saints now and those of the Old Testament times will be more and more understood. But the last clause carries us on to the time of the full accomplishment of God's eternal counsels for us all - "that they without us should not be made perfect." There is no perfection, as such, short of resurrection, and bearing the image of Christ in glory. For this we wait. It may be realized at any moment by the coming of the Lord, and without death for us who are alive at His coming. For if the dead in Christ (all that are Christ's) shall rise first at His shout, and in bodies of glory, we who are alive and remain shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we be perfected together, though even in the eternal glory, the Church - embracing all who are Christ's between Pentecost and His coming - will never lose its distinctive place and relationship to Christ as His body and bride, as we see from Rev. 21:2, 3: "And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them."

Songs in the House of My Pilgrimage

Brief Remarks on Psalm 119:54-63

"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

Happy indeed when the soul in truth can say so.

It is language uttered in the presence of God - breathed into His ear - the overflowing of a heart that loves, values, and delights in the sacred Word.

And what is that Word, we may ask, but the revelation of God Himself - the unfolding of His counsels concerning the Son of His love, and His ways with and counsels about the families of the redeemed, whose lips shall fill the wide earth and yet wider heavens by-and-by with His unending praise? The past, present, and future we find there unveiled so that we may know what has been, what is, and what shall be. There too are revealed those things which God has prepared for them that love Him - things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man."

Oh, think of that! Could you behold all the beautiful things the eye of man has ever seen from Adam's day to ours, listen to the most enchanting sounds that have ever charmed the human ear, and acquaint yourself with the grandest conceptions of the mind of man from Eden until now, all would be infinitely surpassed by the things which God hath prepared - things clothed with such moral beauty, grandeur, and perfection as renders them worthy of Him who has prepared them all.

And these things, mind you, are not held in reserve or kept secret, and intended as some sweet surprise when we reach the shores of eternity, but are made known now, and in words which the Holy Ghost has chosen. The Holy Spirit Himself is also given unto us that we might know the things which God has so freely made ours; for the natural man, with all the advantages of education and cultured intellect, understands them not; they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:9, 14). In these astonishing revelations then the "new man" in the saint of God delights. The beauty, depth, and fullness of them he increasingly learns; they are the joy and rejoicing of his heart; they become his songs in the house of his pilgrimage.

"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Here the ways pass under serious review; they are measured by the pure and perfect Word of the Lord, and the walk ordered and regulated by His testimonies. There is also readiness of heart to obey, not saying, as in Luke 9, "suffer me first" to do this or that, but, like Abraham, who, when told to offer up Isaac, rose up "early in the morning" to carry out the divine command. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." This is very beautiful; it shows a heart governed by the Word.

Oh that this admirable feature were more clearly seen in the saints of God! Alas! it is often hardly to be discerned at all. The will of God is known about certain matters, and yet slowness of step in

carrying it out. The heart runs not with joyous alacrity along the path of obedience. Perhaps to obey involves the giving up of much to which one naturally clings, and the will being at work there is hesitancy and delay. How different from what we find here, and how unlike the Lord, who said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." To Him indeed the path of obedience was a path of suffering and shame; yet He could say, "The Lord God hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Isa. 1:5-7. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Verse 63: "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts." Here is holy fellowship, as in 2 Tim. 2:22: "Flee... but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." There can be no fellowship, according to God, where He is not feared, nor His precepts kept. It would be fellowship in irreverence and disobedience. How little is this thought of!

Strength and Courage: Service and Conflict Require It

Nothing could be plainer to one conversant with Scripture than that the gospel is antagonistic to all the principles of this world, and that, carrying with it as it does the authority of God, it must call forth the resistance of Satan and of men in alienation from God. And this necessarily puts the gospel in the place of conflict, and entails suffering in this world on those who will stand with and for the truth of the gospel. Paul was the prisoner of the Lord, and suffered many and varied afflictions and persecutions for the sake of the gospel which he preached as an ambassador of Christ. And so has it ever been when any have stood for God and His truth in this evil world of which Satan is the prince and god.

Man has fallen under Satan's power, and is in a state of complete alienation from God. The cross was the full witness of this. "This is the heir," they said; "come, let us kill him and possess his inheritance" (Matt. 21:38; J.N.D. Trans.). Man has fallen under the power of one who has usurped the place of God in this world; and so whenever God has been pleased to assert His rights in this world, or to exercise His sovereign prerogatives, man has resisted; as Stephen said, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Pharaoh, Amalek, the Canaanites, all resisted Jehovah in the fulfillment of His purposes as to Israel. And even the Israelites forsook their own Deliverer; and when He sent them prophets, they beat, and stoned, and killed them; and when He sent His Son, they nailed Him to the cross. Jews and Gentiles united in putting to death Jesus the Son of God; and the full character of man's wickedness was thus manifested.

But it was by "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" that He was delivered; and by His death, redemption for guilty man was accomplished. In His death the foundation of eternal salvation was laid, and the ground for the display of greater and higher glories than those of the kingdom of Israel. God raised up Jesus from the dead, and exalted Him to His own right hand, and sent down the Holy Spirit to gather out from Jews and Gentiles a people to His name.

This work is being accomplished through the preaching of the gospel. But it is the gospel preached in the name of the despised and rejected Jesus, and in the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, that so runs counter to all that is in the natural heart of man, and calls forth resistance from both man and Satan.

The instruments God uses are only poor, weak, defenseless creatures without any carnal weapons to carry on their warfare. Yet the charge was given them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark 16:15.

It is easy to see that for the carrying out of this charge some unseen strength was needed. We see, for example, a few fishermen preaching the gospel, and thousands bowing to the authority of that name which they preached, while the world power sought to silence them and stop their work. Yet undismayed, these poor despised fishermen go on with their work. What was the secret? God was with them. The rulers lay their hands on them and put them in the common prison, and the next morning they are found again standing in the temple and preaching to the people "all the

words of this life." God was with them, and bonds and prison bars were nothing to Him if He saw fit to exercise His power. And even though the apostles might be bound, the gospel could not be bound. It was when bound with a chain that Paul preached the gospel before kings and rulers; and he was strengthened so that by him the preaching might be fully known, and all the Gentiles hear. And he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion (2 Tim. 4:17). Here was true strength and real courage, but it was strength in the midst of utter weakness, and courage when there was no hope in human resources.

It was the power of God. The creature instruments were in communion with Him, and hence courage which nothing could daunt filled their hearts. It was all of God who wrought in them effectually for the carrying out of His purposes.

There are many instances given in the Word of God in which we see the display of this power and courage in carrying out the will of God. But the first chapter of Joshua is important as giving us the conditions governing these things. Three times over the Lord exhorts Joshua in that chapter to "be strong and of a good courage." There was the work to be done, the principle on which it was to be done, and the ground of strength and courage for it.

1) The work to be done was the dividing of the land among the tribes of Israel. "Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them." The land to be divided was a land in which there were nations mightier than Israel - a land of "giants," and "chariots of iron," and cities great and "fenced up to heaven." These nations must be overcome in order to divide the land, and for this great work strength and courage were needed.

2) Obedience was the principle on which this work was to be carried on, and the condition of success, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success."

Here we can see there was no way to succeed but by obedience. Joshua was not to turn from the law to the right hand or the left. The words of the law were not to depart out of his mouth; he was to meditate on them day and night; and the result would be a prosperous way and good success.

The importance of this cannot be overestimated. If we have to do with God, His will must be everything. It is His to command; it is ours to obey. We may say we are not under the law as Israel was, which is quite true; but we are none the less called to obey. God has indeed revealed Himself to us in grace, giving His beloved Son, and in Him all blessing; and by faith we partake of the benefits; but while the blessing is by grace and through faith, it also commands the obedience of the heart.

Paul, as an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, received grace and apostleship "for obedience of faith among all the nations" the world began was also "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." There is indeed no other way of going on with God. Our blessing is inseparably bound up with lowly submission to His will.

Now God has made known His will to us in His Word. His will, His purposes, His counsels, are all unfolded there. And if we would know His will and be obedient, we must attend to His Word. The Lord said to Israel: "Therefore shall ye lay up these My words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the doorposts of thine house, and upon thy gates." Deut. 11:18-20.

Such were God's commands to Israel. And if the words of the law had such importance for Israel - if those words were to fill their hearts and occupy their thoughts day and night, in the house and by the way, lying down and rising up - if Joshua was not to turn from the words of the law, to the right hand or to the left, but to have them in his mouth, and meditate upon them both day and night in order to prosper and be successful - how much more ought the revelation God has given us to command the obedience of our hearts, since our whole blessing is bound up in this revelation! It is in the reception of the truth, and as the truth forms the heart and the conscience, that we receive and enjoy blessing. God's Word is bread to the soul, as it is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It is thus that we grow spiritually, and learn God's mind so that we may do His will and have communion with Him. In this way the life, ways, actions, words, motives, desires, and affections of God's people are formed, and in a practical way become a testimony to the truth and grace of God. And God will manifest Himself with and for those who are thus practically governed by His Word.

Strength and Courage: Service and Conflict Require It

3) The ground of strength and courage is the fact that God has commanded, and is with the one who obeys. "Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Josh. 1:9.

The difficulties might be like mountains, the enemy might be great and powerful, but Jehovah was greater than all, and was with His obedient servant, so that he had nothing to fear. He had delivered Israel out of Egypt and brought them through the Red Sea, the wilderness, and the Jordan; and He who had done this could lead them on to victory. He could give strength and courage against which no foe could stand.

This same strength and courage we need. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," it is said, where it is a question of Satan's power and wiles. And when Christianity began to decline, and Timothy was losing heart, the Apostle Paul encouraged him in these words, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God"; and again, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Timothy needed this encouragement, and we need it; and what is more, God is able to give it, and will give it to those who go on in dependent obedience to His will.

But we need to have faith in God. There is a maxim of this world which says, "Knowledge is power"; but with the believer power is rather connected with "faith." Faith brings God in, and to His power there is no limit. Hebrew 11 gives us many examples of this faith which acted with God, and

in which His power was displayed. Moses "endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." "Through faith" they "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the enemies of the aliens." In the midst of weakness faith made them strong. As Paul also said, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

"Have faith in God," Jesus said to His disciples, and then adds, "for verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith." And how could it be otherwise if there is the faith that brings God into the matter? He who created the mountains can surely remove them also if He be pleased to do so. The real question is, Are we walking with Him? Have we the knowledge of His will so that we can act with confidence? Can we bring Him into what we are doing? Are we standing with Him and for Him in the carrying out of His will and His purpose, so that we can connect His name with our service? If this be so, no difficulty can be too great. We can go forward in the name of the Lord with strength and courage of heart, and undismayed by all the power that Satan can raise up against us. And here let us observe that diligence of heart is needful, and I may add, as of equal importance, prayerful dependence. "Meditating day and night," and "praying always," is what the warriors of Christ are called to. Joshua was to meditate on the words of the law day and night, and the Ephesian saints were to pray always with all prayer and supplication for all saints. Paul says to Timothy, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." Oh, if we were more diligent as to the Word of God and prayer, how different our state would be! What fervency of heart in all our service, and what devotedness to Christ and His people, there would be; and how much greater blessing would be enjoyed!

How much we lack this diligence of heart! How many moments every hour, and hours every day, are wasted - time that might be given up to prayer and meditation on God's blessed Word, in which we should find the Holy Spirit refreshing our souls and filling them with that which flows down from the heart of Christ in glory. Hours spent in foolish talk and idle gossip, grieving the Spirit, blighting spiritual growth, and drying up the springs of divine love in the soul, might be spent in holy, edifying conversation about Christ and His things. "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name." Mal. 3:16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another." Col. 3:16. In this we need diligence of heart so that the Lord may be honored, and our blessing and the blessing of others secured.

I may add also that strength and courage are needed more in a day of decline than when all is going well. There is the enemy to contend with, and instead of having the support of our brethren, we may meet with that which chills the heart and fills it with sorrow. Here the heart is tested, and God only can sustain.

There is not only conflict with a common enemy, but there is the state of the saints to be borne as a burden on the heart. Will you bear this burden? Will you cleave to the saints in the power of divine love when they turn away from you as all in Asia did from Paul? Will you seek to serve them when you are misunderstood, misrepresented, or even maligned, as Paul said to the Corinthian

saints, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you: though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved"? The state of the saints with whom we have to do will often be the means of testing the state of our own hearts. It is easy to love my brethren when they love me and heap their favors upon me. But do I love them just the same when they turn against me or forsake me? Do I still cling to them when they have given me up? Do I intercede for them night and day when perhaps they are only speaking evil of me? The real question is, Have I got the heart of Christ about the saints? And do I see Christ's glory bound up in them? Then I shall act toward them according to His heart, and seek His glory in connection with their state, regardless of personal rights or present advantage. Paul could appeal to God as his witness, how he longed after all the Philippian saints in the bowels of Jesus Christ. It was wholehearted devotion to the saints for the sake of Christ, and as having the heart of Christ about them. And this too we need to have; but it requires strength and courage to persevere in it, and the more so if the saints are in a low and carnal state. And we need to be continually cast on God who alone can give strength amid weakness, and lead us on to victory.

Diligent seeking of God's face, and patient waiting on Him for His will, His help, and His guidance, are indispensable. Why have we no strength? Why is there decline among us? Why breaking of ranks, and scattering of the saints? Is it not because we have not lived close to Christ, and gone on in humble dependence on God? And God's Christ, God's truth, and God's people have not had their rightful place in our affections. We have seen one growing careless, and another going wrong, and we have perhaps talked about them, and criticized them when we ought to have been on our faces interceding for them.

But will we lay to heart our own state and that of our brethren? Will we own our slackness of soul - our guilty carelessness - and with diligence of heart seek God's face, and walk with Him? Then we might expect His blessing and the enjoyment of His favor which is better than life (Psalm 63:3). There is no time for loitering, no time for idle gossip, no time for pampering the flesh and feeding it with the vanities of this world. "Wherefore He saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Eph. 5:14-16.

The blessed Lord give the writer and the reader strength and courage in this evil world to live for Himself and for His own, serving Him and them in lowly grace until we are taken out of the scene of conflict and service to rest in the eternal brightness of His own presence, and in the joy of His unchanging love.

A Stronghold

"The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him."
Nah. 1:7.

These are comforting words at any time, but especially in times like the present.

The context describes the Lord, Jehovah, in the most striking and majestic language, as a jealous God, taking vengeance on His adversaries, reserving wrath for His enemies, and by no means clearing the guilty. His power, His majesty, and His judgments are infinite.

But what is He for His people, for the souls who trust Him? "The LORD is good." How sweet this is! Have we not proved it many and many a time? Then He is a "stronghold in the day of trouble." Yes, it is the very same God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity, who must judge sin because it is contrary to His nature - it is this very same God who is the unfailing resource and refuge for His people in every time of trouble.

And not only so, but "He knoweth them that trust in Him." Precious consolation to the heart! He is not unmindful, He never forgets, He never fails the trusting soul, and surely He is worthy of all our trust and confidence.

Let us then, in the dark times as well as in the bright, in days of trial as well as in days of sunshine, trust in Him at all times. If He puts us in the crucible, if He puts faith to the test, it is in order that it may be refined, and be found "unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

Stilling the Waters

Luke 8:22-26

Here is a display of what we may expect if we follow the Lord, and the opening out of what the Lord would be to those tried by such circumstances. The consequence of being the disciples and companions of Jesus, is that they get into jeopardy every hour; they are not on terra-firma, but are tossed about on the troubled sea, and Christ Himself absent ("asleep"). "There came down a storm of wind on the lake," the ship was filled with water, and they were filled with fear, and were in jeopardy. But the fact was, Christ was in the same boat with them. He who made the worlds, the Son of God, was with them; and yet they were afraid, and cried out, "We perish," as though He could be drowned, thus showing they had no sense of who He was that was with them in the boat.

To us, now calmly reading the circumstances, what absurdity there seems in such unbelief when, alas, is it not just the same with ourselves spiritually? Have we no sense of jeopardy when tossed about, and trouble is in the Church? In truth we have, for there is many a heart saying, "Who will show us any good?" forgetting what God is acting and doing, though man is battling to all appearances against God's purposes. But God is not baffled, and He is calmly carrying on His purposes through all the storms raised by man or devils.

In John 16 we find the disciples sorrowing because Jesus was going away, and the Lord had said to them (chap. 14:28), "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father." In chapter 16 Jesus says, "Now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart." God was accomplishing His blessed purposes in redemption by Christ's going. You forget that God is acting in all this, for you cannot suppose that God is too baffled as to give up His purpose. The disciples thought when Jesus was crucified, that all their hopes were disappointed. They say, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). In fact, in that very act and at that very moment, all was being accomplished for them. Where is the Lord going? should have been their question. It is not now that there seems no jeopardy, no confusion, no sorrow; but faith looks at and through it all to God, and asks, What is the Lord doing? Where is the Lord going?

In and through all the trouble, the Lord has not turned a hairbreadth out of His way. We may be in distress, but faith will not say the Lord is far away, but will know Him nigh at hand.

Verse 24. The Lord let them be in jeopardy, the ship filled with water, and Himself asleep on purpose to put their faith to the test, to prove if they were really trusting Him, and that it might be seen if such foolish thoughts would arise when they were put into jeopardy. They say, "Master, we perish"; but they were in the ship with Christ, and could they be drowned? He said to them, "Where is your faith?" Well might He say thus to them, for though the water was in the boat, He was there too, and could sleep through it all. It was not so much of Him they were thinking, as of themselves. "We perish," said they, and it is just the same now; for the fact of being in danger with Christ in the

boat, is the same at one time as at another - just as impossible now as then.

And in truth, Christ is much more with us now, being more perfectly revealed to us; and we are united to Him, one with Him, so that He is with us every moment in the power of the Spirit. However high the waves may rise, there is no drowning His love and thoughts toward us. The test is to our faith. The question is, Have we that faith which so realizes Christ's presence as to keep us as calm and composed in the rough sea as in the smooth? It was not really a question of the rough or smooth sea when Peter was sinking in the water, for he would have sunk without Christ just as much in the smooth as in the rough sea. The fact was, the eye was off Jesus, on the waves, and that made him sink. If we go on with Christ, we shall get into all kinds of difficulties - many a boisterous sea, but being one with Him, His safety is ours. The eye should be off events, although they be ever so solemn, and surely they are so at this present time, and I feel them to be so, for none perhaps has a deeper sense than I of the growth of evil, and of the solemn state of things. But I know all is as settled and secure as if the whole world were favorable.

I quite dread the way many dear saints are looking at events, and not looking at Christ and for Christ. The Lord Himself is the security of His people and, let the world go on as it may, no events can touch Christ. We are safe on the sea if only we have the eye off the waves, with the heart concentrated on Christ, and on the interests of Christ. Then the devil himself cannot touch us.

Things Which Are Before

Beloved, let us be decided, for it is impossible for us to grasp at things "before" and "behind" too. Were we pressing "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"; were we "reaching forth unto those things which are before," we must be forgetting those behind; were we looking up gazing with the eye of faith on our portion above, could we be groping in the dirt of this world for what we might find there? Could we be making a god of business, pleasure, riches, or reputation? Faith is an anticipating grace. Faith is a substantial reliance on the verities of God, such as makes its possessor count all things else but dross and dung for Christ and the things above.

Those Who Remained and Who Retained

Judg. 7

It is a blessed thing when our souls are brought to that state in which we can trust God alone. We are living in a day when truth can be seen so readily - doctrines known to be true, accepted without exercise of heart - but if we are to be real servants we must be brought to hang on God only - to depend on Himself. How precious the lessons taught us in the words of Gideon to his three hundred followers - "Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon." This is the spirit of Paul when he says, "One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling [the calling on high] of God in Christ Jesus." He can say too, "Brethren, be followers together of me" and he weeps over those who, like those Israelites, remained behind and did not go on with Gideon. "Mark [he says] them which walk so as ye have us for an example" - that is, those who had the same object and mark as he had himself.

Now the three hundred of Gideon's day, of Paul's day, and of our own day, are made by the Lord the subject of careful training and of encouragement too. They are always weak ones; "fear and trembling" characterize them as to themselves. Paul can say, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." 1 Cor. 2:3. Again, "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). And see how this "cake of barley bread" - Gideon - needs and gets from God encouragement amid his fears. God says to him, "If thou fear to go down," etc. He would ease every fear which true dependence on Himself would have removed. What comfort, what encouragement, what signs, he gives to Gideon! He fits every servant perfectly, who will not move on until he has real guidance from Himself, and complete independence of all natural resources. In the very word which the Holy Spirit uses in speaking of the three hundred, we see this also. We read, verse 8, he, Gideon, "sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained... three hundred men." When the first and ordinary (see Deut. 20) separation took place, it is, "there remained ten thousand." The twenty and two thousand went back, the nine thousand seven hundred were sent back, out of the ten thousand who "remained," or were left; but the three hundred were "retained" - kept by Gideon. The very word "retained" gives the idea of their needing encouragement. They were weak and probably felt their position. The word is often used for strengthening, and means to harden, to confirm, to lay hold of. A form of the same verb is used in Deut. 1:38, when Jehovah says to Moses, "Joshua, the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him." So in 1 Sam. 30:6, "David encouraged himself in the LORD {Jehovah} his God." Thus Gideon laid hold of those three hundred, for Jehovah's purpose, and for those he had upheld his God's goodness before them; like Paul he had to "comfort" with the "comfort wherewith" he himself was "comforted of God" (2 Cor. 1:4) - to "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Heb. 12:12). They not only remained," they were also "retained."

It is when we rise above man that we learn the joy of real dependence on God. How often are we driven to this, like David; but whatever way we learn that God must be our whole confidence, just at the moment when we cast ourselves on Him thus, He proves Himself not only equal to the emergency, but gives us joy and blessing far beyond our most sanguine expectations. He "will give grace"; But He stops not there; He will give "glory" too (Psalm 84:11).

As an instance of this, look at David at Ziklag. What a hopeless state he seems to be in there! - his friends going to stone him, his failures stinging him to the quick. But it is then that he finds that God must be everything; he encourages himself in Jehovah his God. And God is about to open a wonderful "door" for David. Man would say it was all over with him, but God is going to show His grace, and that He has "abundance" of it (Rom. 5:17). And this some of us have proved. The true Philadelphian gets this "key," even that when all is ruin around, and in ourselves, God is the perfect resource, and there is the "open door." God in Christ opens it, and "none can shut."

David has encouraged himself in Jehovah his God. Will he get nothing from Him? He will get wonders. First, he is so enriched that he is made a bountiful giver himself. "He sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah" (1 Sam. 30:26). This is "grace." But he must get "glory" too. A messenger comes to him with nothing less than a crown! "I took the crown [says he] that was upon his [Saul's] head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord" (2 Sam. 1:10). Did David encourage himself in the LORD his God in vain?

How blessed is this promise for the Philadelphian now! The hopes of the Church for earthly testimony are over forever. Soon the corrupt mass of profession shall be spewed out of Christ's mouth, but He "will give grace and glory" still. The grace is fully seen in the Philadelphian stage, the glory in the Laodicean. The Philadelphian can have both. Are we among those who buy of Him gold tried in the fire - white raiment - eyesalve? If so, we are in moral glory with Christ now. The crown springs from the ocean of grace. We "sup" with Christ who has died to all of man on earth. We find where He dwells, and abide with Him. This is as individual a matter as was David's resource in his God, and as inexplicable to many servants now as it was then. How lonely, yet how blessed is the path of the one who learns what grace and glory are now! The depth of Laodicean indifference and pride will make this more manifest as the darkness deepens.

Have we been "retained" in grace by our Gideon? If we have not, we shall certainly go back. Have we found out that we are utterly weak? Let us not draw back because of this. Let us not turn to some oasis in the desert, some resource in nature's bank which we have stored up. Nature must die. We must find out not only the evil, but the emptiness, of weak nature. We must find ourselves utterly at the end of our own resources and plans and would-be power. Then all our self-assurance, zeal, and activity, even for God, in His service, is laid bare. Those who settle down outside Canaan, like the Reubenites and Gadites, never know what this breaking up is. They have "received their inheritance... on this side Jordan" (Numb. 34:14, 15). They do not go on to receive the "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness." But, oh, how sad, how solemn, to stop short of the "possession of the LORD [Jehovah]!" (Josh. 22:19). By doing so we escape all this exercise of soul - this conscious realization of the weakness which death, because of sin, has brought in; but what an exchange!

Of course grace can and does come in to break us up sometimes, no matter how we refuse and rebel; but I am looking at it now as it is shadowed forth in the Reubenites and their company, who

are a sample of too many in this day. If we want to go on, Reubenite contentedness will pain us around; Reubenite zeal may seem to prove that we are doing nothing, and Reubenite anomalous mingling of nature-power and success even astonish us; but if Christ is really before us, if He is our Object and mark, we shall go on - we shall be "retained"; our weakness will leave room for His strength to "tabernacle" upon us. When self is found utterly wanting, then we shall be fit for any service to which we may be called. Man's need will not make us active when we ought to be sitting at our Lord's feet; we shall come forth knowing what "gold tried in the fire" is; and though nothing in ourselves, we shall be equal to do anything in Him. Want of complete dependence on God is the cause of all our disasters; and when we do fully trust Him, and wholly refuse nature's expedients, He never fails to help, yea, He gives "grace and glory." No matter how deep our failure - how extreme our case - He will succor us perfectly when we turn to Him alone. No matter how great our mercies, how high our elevation or favor, if we rest on man we shall suffer and fall. To preserve a faithful remnant testimony, every individual in that testimony must have everything direct from the Head, though the channels of blessing may and should be gratefully owned.

The Lord grant that we may be not merely among those who "remained," but that we may find ourselves "retained" by Himself. In all our weakness, our "little strength," He can and will encourage us. How gracious His words to the failing but true ones, in such a day as this. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Rev. 3:19, 20.

Three Pillows: Infinite Power, Wisdom, Love

An old preacher, Benjamin Parsons, was asked, "How are you today?" He replied, "My head is resting very sweetly on three pillows, INFINITE POWER, INFINITE WISDOM, INFINITE LOVE.

A preacher once quoted this and some months later visited a poor woman apparently dying. She said to him: "I went through a surgical operation and it was cruel. I was leaning my head on pillows, and as the surgeons were taking them away, I said, 'May I not keep them?' They answered, 'No, we must take them away.' But, said I, you can't take away Benjamin Parsons' three pillows. I can lay my head on these - infinite power, infinite wisdom, infinite love."

Thy Way ... Thy Presence and Separated: Exodus 33

Words on Exod. 33

In a day of confusion and sorrow, the mark of a true heart is the earnest desire to know His way through it all; and this is remarkably evidenced by the position of Moses at that time. Nothing could have been more solemn than the state of Israel; they had accepted the calf, saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." And their mournful condition is thus described: "And the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." The calf and the dancing were the objects upon which the eyes of the man of God rested as he descended from the mount. What will Moses' action be in the midst of such a scene? What are his first thoughts? Let us mark it well. Having broken the tables beneath the mount, and burned the calf and ground it to powder, his first and main thought is the vindication of Jehovah's character and name which had been basely and falsely associated with idolatry and sin. "Who is on the Lord's side?" is neither Laodicean neutrality nor selfish indifference. Very solemn was the test then; and how blessed to find in Levi a people superior to the claims of nature where the honor of Jehovah was concerned, so that it was said of them in relation to this action in Exod. 32:26-29, "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed Thy word, and kept Thy covenant." Deut. 33:8, 9.

This then was Moses' first great act of vindication of Jehovah's claims. How blessed to think of it in this day of half-heartedness on the one side, and indifference on the other - in this day of man (1 Cor. 4:3), when the spirit of Laodicea prevails on the right hand, and the ways and mind of Gallia (Acts 18:12-17) on the left. Very cheering and encouraging to faith are the ways of faith and devotedness in this crisis-moment when "he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey," and when it may be said, as in the days of Jeremiah, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man Of contention to the whole earth."

Now observe what follows this. Having, as we have seen, vindicated Jehovah's name in judgment, and in doing so brought out the faithfulness of Levi, who by the act earned, as it were, the priesthood, Moses shows how his heart apprehended the holiness of Jehovah; and the act of pitching the tabernacle without the camp, thus separating Jehovah's name from the guilt and defilement of Israel, is a blessed instance of its kind and day as to how faith's intimacy with the Lord alone can discern what is suitable to Him. Thus it is Moses makes a place for God outside the camp, afar off from the camp which had put a false god in His place, and changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass. May we not say that this is the kind of nearness to Christ, and devotedness to His blessed interests and name which is lacking so much at this moment? And is this not the quality of faith which He is looking for especially now and for which He Himself commended the church of Philadelphia in these words: "For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name"? May the Lord give His blessed people such loyalty

of heart to His blessed Son in this day.

Another point in this history is full of deep instruction just now. Moses having made a place for God outside the camp, not only removed His name from association with idolatry and sin, and thus maintained His holiness and truth, but thereby was also set up that which some would call a new test; so that we read, "And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp" - mark the words well, "which sought the Lord." Where He was, there was everything. And is it not so now? "There am I" is the rallying point of the hour. In the days of Moses some might have been contented with the camp, resting in that which once marked it, and no longer did so; but every one which sought the Lord went out without the camp.

These principles have a sorrowful but a very appropriate application to present days, for surely the Lord has been teaching us many things, and yet none more strikingly than this: that if we are to have Him who is holy, Him who is true, in our midst, it must be on His own terms. Self-will and unholiness may judge otherwise, but faith will hold fast to His revelation of Himself as the "holy and true"; and look well that such a name as His in its preciousness and value as His people's alone resource, be not associated with what is foreign to His nature and glory. Now having judged the idolatry of the people, and pitched the tabernacle outside the camp, separating the name of God from it, Moses earnestly asks to know Jehovah's way - "Show me now Thy way" (Exod. 33:13). How instructive and how blessed is this; there must be a moral condition of soul for such a desire. Any way out of a difficulty, be it ever so unworthy, will ever find the largest number of adherents; but the moral state indicated by Moses' previous acts in relation to Israel's sin and Jehovah's glory, will not, cannot, be satisfied with anything less than "Thy way" - and how blessed is the reply, and how perfect it is, "My presence shall go with thee." His presence marks His way, and His way is found where His presence is. And is it not so at this moment? If we be without the presence of Christ, we cannot be in His way; but there is more than this, for Moses says further on, "For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." The way that it is known that He goes with us, is that we are separated to Him; it works both ways, only those who are separated seek Him, then finding His presence and His way and the proof that He is with them, is that they are separated. This exclusiveness, as it has been called, works from within to that which is without; the outward part of it may be seen without the inward power - it has ever been so - but it lasts only for a time and manifests constant inconsistencies; but that which springs from within - the power of the cross of Christ (and what so exclusive and separating!) applied unsparingly by the Holy Spirit - will extend to every circle in a consistency and evenness peculiar to itself.

May the Lord teach us at this moment this perfect way of peace and rest! May His beloved people be awakened from every slumber that would incapacitate them from judging what is suitable to Himself, so that with renewed desire to please Him they may prove the reality and blessedness of His presence and His way amid the confusion and darkness of the hour.

Today and Tomorrow

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Rom. 8:18.

TO-DAY and to-morrow! How sweet to contrast Time's short passing griefs with the glories that last;

The partings to-day, with the meetings to come; The bitter "farewell," with the glad "welcome home";

The "little while" here that is shadowed by sorrow,

So soon to be changed for the joy of "to-morrow"; The cares and the fears of these few fleeting days, For the sight "face to face," and the fullness of

praise!

'Tis "but for a moment," affliction and loss, The glory's eternal, though brief was the cross. Look on, fellow-pilgrim, the prospect is bright, The road may be weary, but surely 'tis right;

The heart can rejoice in the midst of its sorrow, And "to-day" be illumed by the light of "to-morrow."

The Two Cups

"My cup runneth over." That is to say, the blessing is greater than we can appropriate. "He is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." (Psalm 16:5). It is infinite - it is Himself. Made ours for time, and for eternity; filling the heart with worship and the lips with praise. Made ours too according to the purposes of His own love, and that we should be to the praise of His glory (see Eph. 1:11, 12), in virtue of that other cup, which was sorrow indeed to Him, and that wrung from Him that marvelous and bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" - the cup of divine judgment due to our sins. That too was a full cup, and to any but to Him, who was Himself infinite, it must have been overflowing and inexhaustible. But He drank it to the very dregs. It did not run over; not a drop escaped His holy lips; there was no miscarriage of justice with respect to sin on the part of God on the one hand, nor any incapacity of endurance on the part of the blessed Lord on the other; all was infinite, all was perfect, in that terrible transaction, and the results to Him and to us are perfect too. He is ours and we are His in fellowship and in glory forever and ever.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (Psalm 23:6).

Jesus said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:31).

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"

Two Helps for the Way: Protected, Directed

At the end of Heb. 4 I get two helps for the way: one the Word of God; the other the intercession of Christ. I am not only protected by the Word, but I am also directed by it. It protects me from going in a way in which I might be drawn aside from its direction; and then being in the road, it directs me.

In the road I get the company of Christ; He says to me, I have been all along it, and I can give you my sympathy in it. The One who is passed through the heavens, is the One who is sympathizing with me all along the way - I, a poor weak thing always wanting to turn up one or another of the ninety-nine roads. And the more alive I am to the enjoyment of things here as a natural man, the more temptation and attraction there is to me. Well then, as I refuse to go up any of these other roads, the more I have Christ's sympathy with me as I tread His path.

Christ does not sympathize with a person in a wrong path. There are two actions in the Word of God: it corrects and it directs. The Lord corrects Martha and directs Mary. A father would say to his child, If you walk in the mud, I cannot walk with you; you must come out of it if you wish to be with me.

You must feel your feebleness, your inability to stand all the difficulties of the way; but the Lord says, I will keep you company; I have been through it before you, and I have never touched sin. If He had ever touched it, He could not have lifted me out of it.

Unique

The Bible is not a magic Book, a good-luck charm. It is God's moral force blazing through the centuries, showing us His character - patient, loving, just, but terribly indignant over man's disobedience. It also shows us the utter hopelessness of man without God. To read the Bible carefully and with an open mind is to see man in both Testaments as he really is, and God as He really is.

God's ultimate Word, of course, was Christ - the Word made flesh. Here is God speaking His mind and living His life through a Person. "This is My beloved Son; hear ye Him." Here is the mind, the heart and the nature of the living God brought near and spelled out in the language of a Life. Here is God's perfect revelation. This is God's Son - the Father's perfect revelation. The God we can understand is the God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.

Waiting - a Personal Love

The Thessalonians had received the hope of the Lord's return as a fundamental truth - they were converted to it. They "turned to God from idols.. to wait for His Son from heaven." It was not a new, strange doctrine among them, not a truth held only by a few who had more knowledge than others, but their common hope, and so prominently so, that we see it was the talk of the country round, that here was a set of people waiting for the return of Jesus from heaven.

We see in this epistle, and indeed throughout the New Testament, how the truth of the Lord's return is brought to bear on all subjects that concern us - for joy, comfort, warning, reproof, or encouragement - all is referred to His return.

The true power of living is this waiting for the Lord from heaven, is in personal love to Him; nothing else will give it. Alas, that we should be so dull, cold, loveless, with such a Savior, such a Head, hope, and home!

"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. 5:23.

Thus far the Lord hath led: another year

Has proved His love, His goodness, and His power: His hand has guided through the year gone by. And daily need has met a full supply

Of daily grace. Now in His strength press on, With steadfast patience, for the victor's crown; Looking to Jesus, living but to prove

That He who loves with everlasting love Has claimed the willing service of my heart. Until you see Him nevermore to part.

The Ways of Grace

Eph. 5

It is a serious thing, while full of comfort and warning to our souls as well, that there is nothing that so condemns sin as grace. The law condemns it, no doubt, but the law itself never judges the nature. It condemns acts. If applied by the Spirit of God, it leads one to gather what the tree must be from the fruit. It infers what the nature is, but it does not indirectly and immediately and entirely deal with it. Grace does: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son [that is grace] in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [as a sacrifice for it], condemned sin in the flesh." God condemned the nature, root and branch, and executed His sentence upon all that man is in his best estate. No disguises could stand now - no excuses - all was brought into the full light of God Himself, and all condemned. It is the same thing from first to last.

Grace is that which strips off all the thin veils which the flesh would cover itself with in order that we should not learn what we are. Grace, while it puts away what we are, yet gives us the privilege of learning it - puts us on God's side to execute His judgment upon it - enables us to deal with it with an unsparing hand just because we have a new nature given from God. We can afford to mortify the old nature because we have a new and divine life that death and Satan cannot touch. And therefore you will find that in those parts of Scripture where grace is most fully brought out, we have the closest exhortations to holiness. Consequently, wherever souls are afraid of grace, they avoid the only thing which can detect and destroy the vain show in which they are walking themselves.

But there is another and a very serious thing for those who have received the grace of God, and who profess to stand in it. It is this: "God is not mocked." He will not allow that the name of His Son should ever be allied with evil. He will never allow that His grace should be pleaded as an excuse for sin. Grace has stretched out its hand, and has plucked us from hell to carry us straight from the jaws of death into heaven itself; no less than this is done in principle when we receive the Lord Jesus. We are taken out of the net of the spoiler and set in the hand of the Father and of the Son, whence none shall pluck us. But if this be so, what is the practical purpose of God in it? What does He intend that we should do under the shelter of this almighty grace which has wrought such marvels for us? Assuredly, that we should never allow the natural evil of our hearts - that we should watch for God, and be jealous for Him against ourselves. We are taken out of ourselves, transplanted into Christ. We become therefore (if we have faith in Him, if it be a real work of the Holy Spirit) identified in feeling with the Lord; we are put in the interests of God, if I may so say, against our own corrupt nature - against evil everywhere, but above all wherever the name of Christ is named. We have nothing directly to do with the corrupt world out-side, but we have to do with our own corrupt nature - much to do with watching against it, judging it, dealing with it for God, wherever it dares to show itself. In love to one another and jealousy for the Lord, we may have to deal with it even in another; but then it must always be in holy love. For even where we have to

watch over one another for the Lord, it is never in the spirit of law - never merely to condemn the evil and then leave a person under the effects of his folly and sin.

But let us listen to a few of the words spoken to the Ephesian saints; and first, in a verse or two of chapter 4: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another." Evidently there we have what is to guide and form the spirit of my walk with my brethren. Is that all? No. It only takes up our spirit toward one another. But we are reminded what God's way is toward us: "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Then it goes on to another thing. The Lord Jesus did not merely die to put away my sin, but to give me the immense privilege of being put before God in all His acceptance and loveliness. I could not be in heaven if it were not so - if it were only that sin is put away. God cannot have anything merely negative in heaven. Mere absence of evil is not enough there. If we are to be in heaven at all, God must have us there lovely in all the loveliness of Christ; and that, as far as the new man is concerned, He communicates to us here. Accordingly, it is said to us, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us," etc. That is going further. A person might forgive another, but there might still be reserve remaining - a shutting oneself up in one's own little circle. Here, on the contrary, we find there is to be the energy that goes out - the love which delights in another's good. It is the activity of love going out toward the saints. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us."

But then another thing comes to light. There is danger even among the saints of God. The devil can come in and turn brotherly love to a snare, and this not only in the way of positive evil being allowed to break out, but in the unjudged tendency to it. "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks." The Lord in no way forbids the happy cheerfulness which He loves in His saints. He does not call us to be monks, which is man's way of keeping the flesh under restraint, and only another form of self. We may have self under a legal form, and self under a lax form; but under any form it is not Christ, and the only thing which God values now is Christ.

"For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." This raises a serious question for all of us. These are things for use. They are exhortations, not merely to apply to other people to measure them by, but to take home to ourselves. They are for saints, not for the world. No doubt we find the evil warned against, in the world, but our hearts ought to feel for those who shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. But, remember that the primary object of the Holy Spirit was to warn and guard the saints themselves who, desiring to watch against the evil distance of the flesh, will, directly they come together, find the danger of another thing, and that is evil nearness. Who then can take care of us if such be the dangers that surround us? Only God, but God still acting in the way of grace. There is no reason why a soul should not have perfect confidence in God against itself. But wherever there is the desire to have our own will and our own evil thoughts gratified - wherever there is the wish to have our way according to the flesh - depend upon it, the judgment of God will be there unless the grace of God interfere to deliver the soul. This is a solemn thing, and one that we need to lay to heart; for the Lord is jealous on our behalf, and He is jealous for His own glory. Therefore, may we be watchful. May we remember what He has

written; that if "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His," be on the one side, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," is on the other.

"Depart from iniquity"! Is it possible that such a word could be said to the saints of God? Yes. It is the word of the Holy Spirit Himself, wherever the name of Christ is named. Let our souls then hold fast grace; but let us remember that the object of all the grace which has been manifested in us is that we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. It is always so. And there is another thought along with it which seems to me of value - that sin when looked at in the presence of God, always acquires its true name and character. I am not allowed to gloss over it and call it by a name that men might give it. For instance, there are a thousand things that men would only call polite. What does God call them? A lie. Again, there are many things that men would say were allowable in the way of business. What does God call them? Dishonesty and covetousness. Such is God's sentence. And would we escape from it? No. We should be left to manifest what we are - that we had named the name of Christ falsely, in our own strength merely, like the Egyptians essaying to pass through the Red Sea after Israel. The result was that they were all drowned.

May we be jealous not to allow ourselves to indulge in the smallest thing that is contrary to God! What a list of things the Spirit of God here warns me against! I can look within and know how my heart answers to what the Word of God says of it, and it has put me on my guard. If I despise the warning, what then? I shall prove what I am, to the dishonor of the name of the Lord Jesus, and my own shame and sorrow. What an effect of a moment's gratification! If then a little word is as the letting out of water, what is a little act of sin, where it is allowed? The Lord keep us from little sins - keep us watchful, jealous, careful, but at the same time never letting grace slip, rather reminding and strengthening one another in that perfect grace in which we stand.

Let us remember that He who has called us to watch against these things, has also called us to thank Him, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always, and for all things. Even if we have to humble ourselves before God for what we are, we are never to forget what Christ is for us and to us.

May we be kept faithful and circumspect in our ways for the Lord Jesus' sake.

We See Jesus

Heb. 2:9

It is very instructive to observe that in reading the gospels we find presented to us not a system of doctrines, but a living Person, even the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John 1:14. In the simple but vivid and exquisitely beautiful narratives of the evangelists, He lives and moves before us. We hear His words of grace, and see His acts of love. The disciples were drawn to Himself, and were occupied with Him. They were ignorant of much truth, but they knew Him who is Truth incarnate, and who was then manifested as the living Truth and Grace come down among men. Thus Peter says, for himself and the rest (John 6:68, 69), "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Even so it is now. True, the Lord Jesus has "died for our sins," but He is "risen again." "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. The eye of faith fixes itself not on a dead Christ, but on a risen, living, glorified Savior.

The constant effort of Satan is to draw away our thoughts and our hearts from Christ. How easy it is to have the mind engaged about ordinances, doctrines, or even our service for Christ, instead of cultivating direct fellowship with Christ Himself. Yet the true blessing of the soul is ever found in steadily contemplating, with the eye of faith, the glorious Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3:18.

Weights

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Heb. 12:1.

Mark how simply the Apostle speaks of it, as if it were easy. Can you "lay aside every weight" so easily? That is what you are called to do. Why cannot you? The moment I feel it is a weight, it is very easy to drop it; but if it is a pleasure, it is very hard to get rid of it. The moment I have Christ as my Object, all these weights become a burden, and I am very glad to throw them off. The secret of it is, the heart looking to Jesus who has run the path; the new nature finding its food in Him has no taste for the things of the world.

What Is the Christian's Rule of Life?

Before seeking to bring out what the Scripture teaches in answer to the question at the head of this article, let us ask each reader of these lines, Are you a Christian? But stay a moment; you may be born in a so-called Christian land; you may make a profession of Christianity, yet, after all, not be a Christian. The word Christian has come to have a very wide and vague meaning; and we fear that much that passes nominally as Christian, would be more correctly termed anti-Christian. Let us then affectionately ask you again, Are you a Christian - a true one? A Christian is a child of God who has forgiveness of sins, and everlasting life, and the Holy Spirit. (1 John 2:12; John 6:47 Cor. 6:19.) Are these blessings yours? If not, the only way to possess them is to take the lost sinner's place, and to claim the lost sinner's Savior, to plead guilty in self judgment before God, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ - His Son.

Now the grievous and soul-destroying mistake that thousands around us are making, is to endeavor to rule their lives more or less according to their own ideas of the meaning of Scripture, without being born again (John 3:3-7). They read the Bible, and their minds are filled with a mixture of law and gospel; there is an indefinite effort to love God and their neighbor; a profession of keeping the ten commandments, or, as many may express it, they do the best they can. But, beloved reader, be warned ere it be too late, all this is utterly vain. There may be a good measure of sincerity in what you are doing; but the Word of God is unmistakably plain, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. 8:8.

Some may reply, But did not God give the ten commandments as a rule of life? He did; but to whom, and when, and for how long? He gave it to Israel, when they were at the foot of Mount Sinai, and till the Seed - Christ - should come. (Exod. 19; 20 Gal. 3:19.) And Christ is the end of the law (Rom. 10:4). The law addresses man in the flesh, when God was looking for good in man. But though He lingered long over him, that good He could not find. The law demanded that which flesh could not produce; it demanded righteousness. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Rom. 7:12. But the flesh is the opposite. It is unholy, unjust, and bad. Therefore we read, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." Gal. 3:21. But that is just what the law could not give. It is not a ministration of life and righteousness, but of death and condemnation (2 Cor. 3). Israel was fully tried; but the teaching of the Holy Spirit through God's servant Paul is, "There is none righteous, no, not one"; "All have sinned," etc. (Rom. 3:10, 23).

Will you then, a poor sinner of the Gentiles, go back to that which only condemns all who attempt to stand by it before God? But "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Rom. 10:4. And as another has said, You are nineteen hundred years too late. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. 2:21).

Furthermore, if our readers will read carefully chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles, they will find that there was a conference held at Jerusalem about this very question, of whether the Gentiles which have not the law (Rom. 2:14), and who believed through grace on the Lord Jesus Christ,

were to be put under the law; and we find that the Apostles, the elders, and the whole Church, and above all the Holy Spirit, were all against it, saying, "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no such commandment." Acts 15:24. And Peter in verse 10 says, "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

"Well, but," some may still reply, "did not Christ say, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven?' (Matt. 5:17-19). And if Christ said so, surely it must be right." A moment, friends, think over that passage again; turn to it in your Testament, and pay special heed as to whom the Lord is speaking. You will find that it is addressed to Jewish disciples (v. 1), and to them only. And, moreover, when addressed to them, man was still on his trial. As the passage shows, He was expecting righteousness from them. "Whosoever shall do," etc.; "Except your righteousness shall exceed," etc. (Matt. 5:19, 20). But it was not long after this He was refused as the King, cast out, and crucified; and His death is the end of the moral history of the race of the first Adam before God. In crucifying Christ, man showed out clearly that instead of keeping the law, by loving God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself, he hated both. Christ was God manifest in the flesh, and man's true neighbor. (1 Tim. 3:16; Luke 10:30-37.) The cross was man's solemn award to that Blessed One, when He, the holy, perfect Man, kept the law which they professed to keep but broke. From that moment the flesh was set aside as utterly corrupt. From that moment God no longer sought righteousness from man. From that moment legal righteousness - that is, human righteousness - was pronounced utterly worthless. (Rom. 3:10-20.)

But Christ, as we have seen, came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill. And He fulfilled it; He magnified it, and made it honorable (Isa. 42:21). The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good; and Christ was holy, just, and good. The law demanded righteousness from man. Every other had failed; but He was Jehovah's righteous Servant (Isa. 53:11). The Son of man was perfect in all His obedience, and the law's highest claims were more than met by Him. The Son of God became flesh, sin apart, and glorified God as the holy Man throughout His pathway (Heb. 1:2-6; 1 Tim. 3:16). And not only so, but He went to the cross, and glorified God as to sin. He, the sinless One, was made sin (2 Cor. 5:21); He died, His blood was shed, He was buried, and God raised Him again the third day, according to the Scriptures (Acts 2:32 Cor. 15:4). And where is He now? Seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens - a Man in the glory of God (Heb. 1:3).

And now, dear reader, let us look at the blessed result. "By the deeds of the law," says the Apostle, "there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 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," etc. Rom. 3:20-22. What could be plainer? The righteousness of God (not of man or of the law) is upon all them that believe. Mark it well - righteousness of God without law. "By faith of Jesus Christ."

You must have a righteousness before God before you can walk by any rule so as to please Him. Of the rule that we are responsible to follow, we shall speak directly. But, first of all, have you apprehended that of which we speak? Is this righteousness upon you?

In Rom. 10 we have a most important scripture bearing upon it. Paul, speaking of his kinsmen, the people of Israel (but equally applicable to thousands today) says, "They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," etc. Rom. 10:3, 4. Now are you clear? Have you submitted yourself to the righteousness of God? If so, then you are one to whom the Apostle refers when he says, "Even... David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Rom. 4:6.

Being accounted righteous by God, on the principle of faith in the finished work of Christ, we are meet for His presence and glory. To such God gives the Holy Spirit, whereby we are sealed for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). But the saved are mostly left for a while on earth, and hence our need of a rule of life. But each must be reckoned righteous before God first, and that by faith, without the law, without works (Rom. 3:21, 4:6). It is of the utmost importance to be perfectly clear as to this, or our walk is sure to be legal, faulty, and of a low standard. The prodigal was pardoned, reconciled, clad with the best robe, before the shoes were put on his feet (Luke 15). And we must be pardoned, reconciled, clothed with Christ, before we can be fitted to walk before God so as to please Him.

And now we come to the point more immediately before us in this article - What is the Christian's rule of life? Many, again, who readily admit that we are not under the law for justification, still plead that we must take the ten commandments as the standard of our walk. But what saith the Scripture? We have already alluded in passing to 2 Cor. 3, which shows that they are a ministration of death and condemnation. How then can they be a rule of life? Have such persons never read in the Word, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10)? And "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Jas. 2:10. And where is there one who is not convicted on that ground? Where is there one that will have the effrontery to say he has kept all without fail? There is then nothing but death and condemnation for all who attempt to stand by the law. To go back to it after being justified by faith, is to return to bondage. It is another gospel, and yet not another, for it takes the gospel away (Gal. 1:6-9).

But God has given us a rule of life, and it is a far higher code than the law. Paul sums it up in one short sentence, full of meaning: "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). This is abundantly confirmed elsewhere; "He that saith he abideth in Him ought Himself also so to walk, even as He walked." 1 John 2:6. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." 1 John 3:3. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me," etc. (John 12:26). "Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin," etc. (1 Pet. 2:21, 22). "That the righteousness [or righteous requirement] of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8:4. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children." Eph. 5:1. And last, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, but a new creature [or creation]. And as many as walk according to this rule,

peace be on them, and mercy," etc. Gal. 6:15, 16. And we might multiply passages, all showing the same truth, that Christ is now the believer's rule of life; that is to say, that the Christian is to follow Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in him (Rom. 8:14), taking Christ as his rule, standard, measure, example, in everything.

The whole teaching of the epistle to the Galatians is to show how evil a thing it is for Christians, who are the subjects of grace, to return to the law. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Gal. 5:1-6.

"Wherefore, my brethren," we read again, "ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God... that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:4-6). "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Jas. 1:22. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Jas. 1:25.

Is there any reason for license it all this? God forbid. No, there is none whatever, but the very opposite. "I through the law," says the Apostle, "am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Gal. 2:19. We are redeemed, and we are also purchased. Redemption makes us Christ's freedmen, and purchase makes us His bondmen. "Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Gal. 5:16. And "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Gal. 5:22, 23.

To sum up, in closing, what we have written: The law is God's claim of obedience from man in the flesh, showing what he must be, and do, and not do, if he would please God. After full trial, he utterly failed. But Christ, the holy One, magnified the law. Then He bore its curse on behalf of the sinner on the cross, died, rose, and thereby wrought a complete deliverance for every one that believes.

The Gentiles are brought in on the ground of grace, and all alike are accounted righteous by faith without the deeds of the law, being accepted before God in Him, the Beloved. And Christ is the Object and hope, standard and example, for every believer. In short, Christ is our Savior, and our rule of life when we are saved, and not the law at all. And just in proportion as the Christian, walking in the power of the Spirit, keeps the Word, so in proportion is there conformity to God's standard. May we be ever mindful of the words of the Apostle - "To me to live is Christ."

What Is the Church?

Question - What constitutes "the church, which is His body," and has it now a corporate existence on earth?

Answer - the unfolding of this blessed truth, "the mystery of Christ," was committed to the Apostle Paul. It is in his letters we shall find instructions concerning it. Eph. 4:4 declares, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling."

This began at Jerusalem when the promise of the Father was given; the Holy Ghost came upon the disciples in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. (John 14:16, 17; Acts 2:32, 33, 1-4.) It could not take place before (John 7:39). It was then that the baptism of the Holy Spirit took place, and thus formed them into "one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). From that time on God has been gathering into one the children of God that were scattered abroad. The Jews, the Samaritans, and the Gentiles, all who were true believers, were brought into that one body by the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. Acts 10:44, 45 and 11:15-17 is the bringing in of the first Gentiles into the body of Christ.

This truth is not spoken of in the Old Testament, nor was it given out till Paul received it from Christ in glory; then it was made known for the obedience of faith (Rom. 16:25, 26).

It was God's purpose concerning His beloved Son to give Him a body and a bride - companions to share His glory. And all who are called during this present period of grace, and know Christ to the salvation of their souls, both of Jews and Gentiles, will inevitably have this place in glory with Him.

This was God's purpose before the foundation of the world, and is now being carried out. "Christ... loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Matt. 13:45, 46; Eph. 5:25) when it existed only in the purposes of God. It was God's great thought for His Son to have one in whom His affections rested, and who would be through grace alone, the display of His glory through all eternity (Eph. 3:21).

In the meantime the members are being called out - that is, set apart - and cleansed by the washing of water by the Word, fitted for Him as in the picture in Gen. 24 - Rebekah was fitted for Isaac (Eph. 5:26); and then when the last member is brought in, He will tarry no longer. We shall be caught up, and He will present her to Himself without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, holy and without blemish (v. 27). In Eph. 1:23 we see her in the glory - the fullness of Him that fills all in all - the bride of the Second Man, displaying His glory.

Now on earth the living Christians are spoken of as the body of Christ, and it is always complete. In Rom. 12:4 and 5 we see the members working together, each one according to the grace given, ministering according to its faith. In 1 Cor. 12 it is described in its functional activity. It is plainly here on earth and now. There is no preaching of the gospel in heaven, no suffering for Christ there; all this is on earth.

If we were judging by the frequent behavior of Christians, we might conclude that the body of Christ is not on earth, or just a theory and not a fact; but the Word of God declares, "There is one body." Outwardly neglected, and scattered into denominations, we do not see it as such. Christians, some in ignorance and some in self-will, refuse to obey the truth, or neglect it; but there the word stands, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of your calling," thus giving us all the privilege, and putting on us the responsibility of maintaining"- the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We are not asked to keep the unity of the body. The Holy Spirit has formed the body, and maintains it by His presence, uniting every believer to Christ in glory, so that till the Lord comes for His Church, it is ever true, "There is one body," and faith will act upon it, seeking to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is no scriptural way to gather together and to take the Lord's supper except as members of the body of Christ, in the acknowledgment of this truth. (1 Cor. 10:16, 17 proves this.)

The Lord's Supper is the external expression of this unity. We being many are one bread (or loaf), one body, for we are all partakers of that one loaf.

In the cup we see redemption. In the loaf, unity of the body. We, therefore, own every true believer as a member of that body of Christ, only in the last days we need carefulness to distinguish those who truly call on the Lord out of a pure heart. At the first, all who believed were together. Now, there are sad divisions, but the "one body" remains.

The first mention of the Church in Scripture is in Matt. 16:18 where the Lord calls it "My church." It is composed of living stones, built upon Christ the Rock, in eternal security from the power of death. 1 Pet. 2:5 describes these living stones as a holy priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ - each one a purged worshiper. They are the same saints that compose the body of Christ, here seen as a worshiping company.

Where men are the builders, the professing church is looked at in responsibility, and there it includes all, both saved and unsaved, who have been baptized (1 Cor. 3:10-17; Eph. 4:5; 2 Tim. 2:19-22; 3:2-5; 1 Pet. 4:17; Jude; Revelation chapters 2 and 3). These could not represent the body of Christ, as it includes only believers.

What Israel Ought to Do

It is said of some of those who surrounded David at Hebron, that they "had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." Alas! it is to be feared that it is more than can be said of too many who profess to have come out in this present day to the true David in his rejection.

In earlier days, even ere the land of promise was entered, we are told that it was the conduct of some of the spies that spread fear and discontent in Israel; they made the heart of the people melt by bringing up an evil report of the land they had searched (see Numb. 13; Josh. 14). This is the very opposite of knowing what Israel ought to do.

Now it cannot be denied that while the truth of God is one great whole and that all and every portion of it is the property through grace of His children, and all needed too in its place, there have been certain parts of it to which at different times as special truth the Holy Spirit has been pleased to give prominence, either in recovering it after years of ignorance, superstition, and darkness, or else reviving its preciousness in the waning affections of His saints. This is so plain that to dispute it seems blindness indeed; more than that too may be urged in the remembrance of how God has ever connected the knowledge of His mind, the understanding of the thing that He does with loyalty of heart toward Himself. "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?" shows very clearly that it was a special and peculiar line of action; and, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him," shows very distinctly that faithfulness on Abraham's part was the ground of the communication being made to him.

Now the importance of having a divine estimate of anything cannot be overrated; it is false and mischievous in the extreme to suppose that it is in any sense an experience. "The knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," is in order to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; and the practical result with the experience flowing from it, depends upon the saint being filled with the knowledge of God's will. The Lord has been graciously pleased in His sovereign goodness to raise up from time to time vessels of His own election to whom He communicated His mind, and through whom He spread it among His people. The last of such vessels in the way of special revelation was the

Apostle of the Gentiles; as soon as the mystery was made known to him, the Word of God was completed; it was given to Paul to complete it. (See Col. 1:25.) He could say as none other even of the apostles, "Be followers together of me." We know that so far from that having been a general thing, "all they that are in Asia" were turned away from him; and at his first answer no man stood with him, but all forsook him. The fashion then, as now, was the other way.

Since the days of the Apostle, God has graciously been pleased to recover much of His truth by vessels of His own choosing; of such the Word says, "Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation, imitate their faith." Heb.

13:7; J.N.D. Trans. The greatest favor that could be accorded to any saint of God on earth is to be a friend of Christ. In David's day those who knew what Israel ought to do, were his friends, and surrounded him at Ziklag and Hebron; in these days those whose one desire is to please the Lord and answer to His longings, surround Him in spirit in heaven where He is crowned, and surround Him also on earth where He is despised and rejected. "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." John 15:14, 15. The Lord grant that many hearts may be aroused at this moment to seek as His friends His mind for this present time, undeterred alike by the indifference and heartlessness of His own people, and by the deadly opposition of the world and its prince.

What Seek Ye? Part 1

Luke 12:31-59

In the chapter we have read, we are reminded by our blessed Lord that we are not always going to stay here. Things are not always going to run on as they are now from day to day. There is a great crisis in the offing. We are going to be taken out of this scene one of these days, and be ushered into new surroundings. We are not there yet. We are on the way.

In this chapter we have certain exhortations and admonitions that are to be for our profit while we are waiting for the translation. This paragraph opens with the words, "Rather seek ye the kingdom of God." Everyone here is a seeker. I take it that I am not speaking to an audience composed of aimless people. A tramp is someone who is going, but he is going nowhere. He leads an aimless life; one place is as good as another, and one day is as good as another; he lives from day to day with no object. Not so with you. You are a seeker. You have an object before you.

Perhaps it would be well to stop and let the Lord ask us a question that He asked those in the 1st chapter of John's Gospel: "What seek ye?" I believe that is a question we need to ask often. Remember, He was the One who asked it. "What seek ye?" The exhortation here is, "Seek ye the kingdom of God." Is that what we are seeking?

We have entered a new year. Yes, the old is in the past. The sands have all run through the glass. Now we are starting over again. What is the object before our souls? Shall we take inventory? What would you like this year to bring forth in your life? "What seek ye?" Those two in the 1st chapter of John's Gospel gave a lovely answer. They said, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" What were they seeking? Companionship with Christ. And He said to them, "Come and see," and they went and saw where He dwelt; and they abode with Him that same hour. Oh, they found the end of the quest, didn't they? They found Christ as the object of their souls, and they dwelt with Him. We are not in heaven yet; we are beset with the perplexities and problems that have to do with the necessities of life. We are fathers and mothers and husbands and wives and children and employers and servants. We have our various relationships here in life. We cannot ignore the fact; but at the same time, what is the overall object that is giving color to all these relationships? What is the gripping motive of the heart? the driving power in the life that is carrying us on through all these various human relationships? The exhortation here is, "Seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."

That term, "kingdom of God," is a very wide one in Luke's Gospel. I take it that the kingdom of God takes in all those moral questions of every relationship of life, in responsibility to the One who placed us here in this world. You and I came not into this world by any choosing of our own. We did not ask to come here. We find ourselves here, and when we come to years of intelligence, we gain the knowledge of the One who placed us here. (I trust that those to whom I am speaking this afternoon have made the acquaintance of that One, not only as the One that spread the heavens, but as the One that died for sinners - have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, and

have become a part of the family of God.) You now have a heavenly relationship, so you start all over again, and you bring every relationship of life to Him, and say, Now, Lord, I am going to be a father, I am going to be a mother, a son, a daughter, a brother, a sister, a child, a master, a servant, in a new way. I am going to seek to be a father that walks before God. I am going to seek to be a mother that has the consciousness all the time that I am responsible to bring up my little family to the glory of my beloved Lord; and if you are a master, you seek in that position of yours to carry the spirit of Christ; and if you are a servant, you are not one with eye-service, as men pleasers, but you realize that solemn word, "Thou God seest me." Every relationship of life assumes a new dignity now. You bring it to Him, and you ask Him to bless it. Ah, what a happy service that is! What a transformation of life that is! Every day becomes a day when you and I can use every relationship of life to the glory of God.

"What seek ye?" What is our object? - and one wonders sometimes if we get our eyes off the true Object. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." This room is well filled with young people. I have always had a warm spot in my heart for them. I was young once myself. Young folks, what are you seeking? You are laying your plans; what do you have ahead? I trust that you have bowed the knee many a time, as you are making decisions in life, regarding the kind of home you are going to buy, where you are going to locate, the kind of position you are going to accept, and asked the Lord if this is His will. Is it for the glory of God? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

We are living in strange days. Man seems to have a sense of insecurity as perhaps he has never had in the history of the world, and there is a desperate effort on the part of those in this world to reach a measure of security. They are seeking, it nationally and internationally, but not only so; the man of the world seeks individually to make himself secure in a temporal way. He takes out insurance against that catastrophe and against this and that possibility, so that the ramifications of insurance have become exceedingly complex - all in an effort to establish a sense of security in this world. What does our verse say? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God... and all these things shall be added unto you." Are you willing to step out on that promise? By way of illustration: In the old "Traveler's Guide," there was a picture of a man standing at the edge of a frozen river and testing the ice with his cane. He wondered if it would hold him, yet in the middle of the river was a huge sled load of logs drawn by a yoke of oxen! How foolish we are! Is not the God who built the sky able to take you and me safely through this journey if we make first things first? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Luke 12:32: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Here we have one of those sweet and precious "Fear nots" of the Bible. I have never counted them; perhaps you have, but their number is legion. "Fear not, fear not, fear not." Who says it? Oh, it is our God who says it to us. We mentioned a moment ago that we are on the threshold of a new year. Are you apprehensive? Do you tremble? Do you wonder what lies ahead? Do you shrink back? Listen. "Fear not." Who says it? The blessed Lord. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

"Little flock." We are living in the days of bigness. People love to talk in superlatives, and everything is bigger and better. Sad to say, that spirit has invaded the spiritual realm. It has gotten in among God's people, and they are trying to run competition and keep up with the activity and

pace of the world, so we draw our pattern of spiritual progress after the pattern of the great men of this world. Oh, beloved, when our Lord spoke these words, He was addressing a little flock, a precious little flock. They were not numbered by the thousands and tens of thousands. No, they were numbered by the two's and three's.

"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." After our Lord had served here for a matter of 3 1/2 years of intense ministry, how many were there in that great city - Jerusalem - waiting in the upper room for the promise? One hundred and twenty. After 3 1/2 years of labor and toil and tears, a little group of 120 waiting in the upper room for the promise. Oh, beloved, when we deal in the things of God, we must remember that we are dealing with what He can own as real. "Little flock." We cannot look out over this world, so apostate from God, and think for a moment that that is the little flock about which He is talking. But in the midst of a great, sinful, apostate world, God marks out here and there a precious soul that is washed in the blood of the Lamb, and numbers them among the little flock.

"Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." God is not looking for mammoth programs. He is not looking for vast amphitheaters. He is seeking precious souls. He is seeking them where they are to be found, and you and I from day to day can seek grace from Him to speak faithfully of Christ as we have opportunity. I sometimes wonder, as I behold the methods that have become so popular about us today in the proclamation of the gospel, what the dear Apostle Paul would think if he came back into the world. My heart is grieved and burdened as I think that we have reached a place where the servants of God have become too big for the little flock. They must have their thousands and tens of thousands; they can boast in their hundred thousands. Oh, beloved, that is not the language of Scripture. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

In the verses that follow, we have an exhortation to be, as a dear servant of Christ used to put it, "distributors rather than accumulators." We need to have a bank account up there, so He says here, "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." There is some heavenly book-keeping going on, and you and I are making deposits day by day. I wonder how the account stands at the end of this year. If we were to turn to the 16th chapter of Luke, we would find this verse: "Make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails ye may be received into the eternal tabernacles" (J.N.D. Trans.). That is the transmutation of the vain mammon of this life into the coin of heaven. You and I have the privilege, as we go through this world, of seeking to use our time, our talents, our strength, our means, our homes, in such a way that by-and-by, when we change worlds, there will be something on the other side. Brethren, sisters, how does the account stand?

We hear a lot about bankruptcy. Well, it is a bad thing to go bankrupt; but oh, heavenly bankruptcy would be a lot worse, would it not? God has given us a means whereby we can send on ahead to meet us in that coming day those things that He has entrusted to us down here. I trust that we know something about stewardship. Let us not confine it to terms of dollars and cents, for I judge that it includes all the powers with which we have been endowed by God - our strength, our means, our gifts, our abilities, whatever it is. Are we using them in view of the coming day?

Luke 12:35: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." Girded loins means that we realize life is serious. That is the opposite of rocking chair Christianity. "Loins girt about with truth" - the Word of God guarding and guiding us day by day. Ah, how we need it! There is a lot of loose living among Christians today, sad to say. If we have a piece of work before us, we gird our loins to get ready for it. So the Lord Jesus here is exhorting you and me to gird up those loins. "And your lights burning." That light was not given to be put under the bed. No, that is not the place for it, nor under the bushel. In other words, that light can be darkened either by taking it easy in the pleasures of this life, or by the treacherous bushel - the business that occupies us so thoroughly. The things of this life can obscure that light. But it is to be put on a candlestick, and it gives its light to all in the

house.

Why Do I Rejoice?

The God with whom we have to do is a God who calls us to joy, and never can we get to the end of that joy. Why do I rejoice? Because Christ has loved me, and washed me in His own blood - because He has given me life in Himself has connected me with all spiritual blessings has given me to know that I am linked with Him now, as a living Person, in all I am doing and passing through. Why? Because when He comes on a cloud of glory, He will take me up and make me like Himself. Why? Because I shall go into the Father's house with Him. What! all that God sees in Him is mine! Let no one come in and disturb my enjoyment.

Lessons of the Wilderness

Exod. 17

We will now look at the third stage of Israel's journey - Rephidim (chap. 17). And again there was no water. Ah! it is hard for the flesh to bear this - to find at every step no water. Yet such is the journey of this wilderness. Think of the path of our precious Lord, and think what awaited His servant Paul in every city (Acts 20). And such is our path, my fellow traveler, in proportion as we are true to Him.

And again (for the people were not yet under law) the Lord met their grievous murmurings in the fullest grace. The rock of Horeb was smitten and out came water that all the people might drink. Moses called the name of that place, Temptation and strife (v. 7). O my young traveler, when your heart is ready to murmur - when Satan whispers, You had better give up the journey and return to the world - when every cistern fails - when you are ready to sink in temptation and strife - when your thoughts are all in confusion - when Satan seems let loose against you - when everything seems against you - at such a time remember the Rock that was smitten for you. Yes, at such a time look off to Jesus. Was ever sorrow like His sorrow? and was ever love like His? You will be amazed to find wicked unbelieving thoughts arise in you.

And "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel at Rephidim." Now as this is the first and only battle of Israel while they remained under grace, before the law was given, it should be studied with the deepest interest by us who are not under law, but under grace. I do not think this battle of Rephidim typifies our conflict with wicked spirits so much; that we shall get when we see Israel in the land of Canaan. But I rather look at this Rephidim as showing us a picture of the sudden attack of temptation through the lusts of the flesh. It was just as they said, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" At that very moment of their doubting, "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel." Nothing gives the enemy more power than to doubt whether we are the children of God or not, or to doubt whether He is with us and for us or not.

And now, my young Christian, this battle of Rephidim is a very solemn question. You will find that though you have redemption through the blood of Christ, are a child of God, have fed with delight on Christ the heavenly manna, yet to your surprise the lusts of your old nature are as bad as ever. That which is born of the Spirit has not altered the flesh in the least. If Israel had stayed in Egypt, they would never have fought Amalek. And if you had not the new nature, you would never have known this fierce conflict with the old nature. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot [or may not] do the things that ye would." Gal. 5:17. These are the plain words of God, and every child of God finds it so in his experience. What would he not do were it not for the Holy Spirit who dwells in him.

Now the battle of Rephidim. Read carefully these verses: Exod. 17:8-16 - golden lessons for the young soldier of Christ. Some teachers would tell you, In the hour of temptation your only safety is to try your utmost to keep the law.

I once knew a young Christian, when fighting in Rephidim, as a last resource, write down all the denunciations and commands of God respecting the sin that so harassed him. But this helped him not at all. Nothing could be more striking than God's teaching and man's on this important point. Says man, You are under the law as the rule of life, and sin will surely have the dominion if you do not strive to keep it. Says God, It was the ministration of death, and is now abolished (2 Cor. 3:7-14); and "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. 6:14. Thus you see, my young traveler, if you are led of man, you will be under law and bondage; "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Gal. 5:18. The contrast between God's teaching and man's is very striking, is it not?

But then the question is, when passing through Rephidim (through fierce temptation) - tempted to commit fearful sins - If the law does not help me at such a time, but only excites lusts still more, as is said in Rom. 7:7-18, I say, If the law does not help, what does? And what is the principle of victory over the lusts of the flesh? I look at the battle of Rephidim as a golden answer to this perplexing difficulty in the hour of need. To human reason, perhaps, nothing could be more foolish. There was no digging of trenches or display of military skill; but Moses says, "I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand." "And it come to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed." What a picture of the divine principle of prevailing faith! And it is especially valuable, as I have said before, when we bear in mind this is the only battle Israel fought while on the principle of grace and not as yet under law.

And now if my reader has traveled some length of the wilderness journey, let me ask him to turn over the pages of memory, and then tell me, as we say, Is not this picture true to the very life? Just as you have trusted in anything else but God - sin has prevailed. Thus the mighty principle of faith is set before us as the only means of victory in temptation. We never make resolutions but we fail and break them; and we never look alone to God but we are delivered. Do remember the battle of Rephidim in the hour of temptation. Lift up your heart and let the cry of faith go up to God. Perhaps you say, My heart is so heavy. And so were the hands of Moses. "But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun."

Now there are some very precious and important points of soul-sustaining truth set before the believer in conflict, in this verse. It is of the greatest moment at such a time that you remember that great stone; the Rock of Ages supports you. Oh, to know that however the storm of temptation may assail, your feet are on the Rock that cannot be moved. Beware of those shifting sands, those unbelieving thoughts that you may be on the Rock today and off and lost tomorrow. Nothing can more tend to weaken the child of God in the hour of sore temptation than these false doctrines. No, my reader, if you have redemption, it is eternal redemption; if you have life, it is eternal life; if you are on the Rock, none can pluck you off forever. The stone, however, was not put under Moses that he might hang down his hands, but that they might be steadily held up. Neither would I put this blessed truth before you, or rather show you the Rock that sustains you, that you may become careless and cease to steadily trust in God for victory over lust and sin. No! but for the very purpose of encouraging your faith in the darkest hour.

But further, for the support of the heavy hands of Moses, Aaron and Hur stayed up on his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side. And does not He whose name is Jesus, by whose death and resurrection we are justified, "also make intercession for us"? "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us" according to the will of God. What divine strength this gives in the hour of strong temptation. There is the exalted Son of God on the one side, that is in the very presence of God, holding up the hands of faith, making intercession. And there is on the other side, that is, down here in the believer, the Holy Spirit making intercession. How doubly held up!

But perhaps my reader may be sadly cast down - you may have been surprised by Amalek - perhaps you thought lust and temptation were all gone - you had pictured a path of sunshine, and so it is if the eye is kept on Jesus. You may, however, have resolved to walk with God, and for a time all was smooth; but the sudden attack of the enemy took you by surprise, your hands were let down, Amalek, that is your sins, prevailed. Has Satan got an advantage over you? Has there been failure? I think I hear you whisper, Little did I expect it, but I have sinned since my conversion, and now I am very unhappy. The brightness of noon seems to be turned into midnight darkness. Satan says, You are not on the Rock now. The great High Priest passed into the heavens will not intercede for you now. The Holy Spirit does not make intercession for you now. Stop, poor doubting one, do not listen to the enemy. Was not the Rock of Ages cleft for you? Is it not His very blood that has met all your sins and washed them all away? And does not the Spirit say, by John when writing on this very subject, "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," etc. 1 John 2:1. Are you His child? Have you sinned? Then think what is taking place in your Father's presence. What an advocate! Look at Him and listen to His pleadings for you; He pleads His own blood. Do not these words meet your case - "If any man sin"? Surely this is not that you may sin, but that you may not sin. But if you have sinned, the knowledge of your Advocate on high lifts up again the arms of faith; and though Amalek has prevailed, you now prevail again.

But perhaps you say, If I have sinned, have I not grieved the Holy Spirit, and consequently, has He not departed from me? No; this is impossible now. The Holy Spirit dwells in you as the seal to the value of the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10; Eph. 1). So the blood of Jesus must lose its value before the Holy Spirit can cease to dwell now in the child of God. You may -alas! how often we do - grieve the Holy Spirit by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption. But one great distinguishing feature of the present dispensation is that the Holy Spirit abides with us to the end. I have found this solemn fact one of the most sustaining truths in God's Word. The Apostle uses it for this purpose when writing to the Corinthians. (See 1 Cor. 3:16, 17.) Do think of this when pressed hard by temptation: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" And see how solemnly this is pressed in 1 Cor. 6:15-20.

My reader may not have been aware of all this, but search the Scriptures and see if these things are not so. We have a watchful, powerful foe, and are surrounded by every manner of ensnaring temptation, and especially so to the young Christian; and still we have to wage war with deadly, hateful lusts. If left to ourselves, utterly without strength to resist the least of them, how important then to know the Rock on which we stand, and to know that on the one side we have the risen Lord, and on the other, the blessed Spirit never ceasing to make intercession for us.

And as there was to be no compromise between Israel and Amalek, so let there be no compromise, my dear reader, between you and fleshly lusts that war against the soul. From this day forward - even though Amalek may have prevailed, and though you may have failed and sinned - may the Spirit of God show you the Advocate with the Father, pleading for you; and now may past failure and sin be confessed to your Father. You will find He is faithful and just to forgive you all sins and cleanse from all unrighteousness. He is faithful and just to the claims of your Advocate, and therefore you are forgiven and cleansed. This is as sure as you have, by His Spirit, made confession to Him. Do not omit this - if sin has prevailed confess it to your Father. And now, henceforth, may He give the reader and the writer the victory of faith. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.

Thus the battle of Rephidim sets before us the blessed principle of victory over sin and the world. If my reader fights on the principle of law, you will be overcome; if on the principle of faith, you will overcome. And just as your hands hang down or are lifted up, you will fail or prevail. And you who have trodden the greater part of the journey, I appeal to your hearts and consciences - Is it not so, just as we have looked to God we have overcome, and just as we have resolved to do our best, we have failed? What years of sorrow a life of simple faith would save the child of God. Would you, my dear young Christian, then spend your little while in holy, happy, devoted service to God? Then have no confidence in the flesh; never trust self. Pray without ceasing - at all times and in all places. Remember, you are the temple of the Holy Spirit; He intercedes for you; the risen High Priest is your Advocate; God is for you. Though He chasten, it is because He loves you. Do not forget that you are never safe from temptation a moment, except that moment is spent trusting Him. How soon after the manner and rest came temptation and Amalek. In seasons of richest blessing, when filled with Christ the heavenly manna, and the heart at rest in God, yet even then how near we are to danger! How sudden the change to fierce and unexpected temptation! Oh, watch; pray; trust. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." Jude 24, 25.

Lessons of the Wilderness: Shur, Sin, and Rephidim

Lessons of the Wilderness Shur, Sin, and Rephidim Part 1

We will now in dependence on the teaching of the Holy Spirit look at the lessons of Shur, Sin, and Rephidim (Ex. 15-17). We shall find each presents a distinct, solemn, yet precious lesson.

First, the lesson of the wilderness of Shur. "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water." These are few words, but what a depth of meaning there is in them - so soon after the triumphant song of redemption, only three days' journey from the place of death and deliverance - the Red Sea. And now to find no water. Have you counted the cost? The cross of Christ as separating us from the world is a very solemn matter. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Gal. 6:14. What was so debased and contemptible in the eyes of the world as a person crucified? And this was what the world was to the Apostle, and what he was to the world.

The three days' journey very aptly illustrates the exact place into which the believer is brought - dead with Christ and risen with Him. Yes, the three days' journey from death to resurrection has separated you, my fellow traveler, forever from Egypt, that is the world. But you say it looks very strange that the redeemed who had just been shouting the song of triumph, should be so soon distressed and find no water. Was not this just the way the young Christians at Thessalonica had been brought to God, "Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost"? 1 Thess. 1:6.

Now mark, this is the first lesson after redemption; and if my reader has redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, do not be surprised if you find, the first journey you take in the wilderness, that there is no water. I believe this is a sure sign that you are redeemed. Do you find it so, or can you still drink of the world's pleasures and be satisfied? Ah, if so, do not be deceived; you are still in Egypt, still in the iron grasp of Satan who leads you captive at his will. Do not be offended if I tell you the truth. Must I not be faithful? O how many are thus going down to perdition with a lie in their right hand! But with you, my dear young Christian, it is not so. The things that once so pleased you yield no satisfaction now. I cannot express it like Scripture. You find no water. Solemn lesson of Shur! The New Testament is very strong on this subject: "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." Read 1 John 2:15-17. And again, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." James 4:4.

And when we think of the amazing price of our redemption, can we wonder that our separation from the world lying in the wicked one should be so entire? But at such a time when you find no water, nothing to satisfy, then beware of murmuring.

The next lesson of Shur is equally striking.

"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter." This was trying indeed - more trying than finding no water. How often this is the case with the young believer, and the old one too. We grasp at that which we think will satisfy, and find only bitter disappointment. Have you not found it so? Have you tried the pleasures or the riches or the honors of the world, and found only bitterness? You are invited to a gay party. Once this would have been very delightful, but now how bitter to the taste of the new nature! How utterly disappointed you return home! Have you set your heart on some earthly object? You are permitted to obtain it, but how empty! Yes, what you expected to yield such satisfaction yields only bitter sorrow and emptiness. Oh, beware of murmuring. Not one thing has happened to you but what is common to the children of God.

This world is a wilderness wide where there is not a tree in it yielding satisfying fruit. But there is a tree. "The LORD showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." Yes, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." S. of Sol. 2:3. Surely that tree is Christ. Ah, nothing can sweeten the bitter cup of this life but sitting beneath His shadow. Oh, what delight, what sweetness to the taste of the newborn babe! How simple then this second lesson of the wilderness of Shur. Are you, my fellow Christian, beginning to find the waters of this life bitter? Come then near to Jesus; sit at His feet; His fruit shall be sweet to your taste; His words shall be sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. Are the things of the world sweet or bitter? Is Christ to you like the one precious tree laden with sweetest fruit, where all beside is barrenness and waste? Then hearken to the precept of the Lord to His people Israel. And mark, this was before the law was given. And certainly it could have nothing to do with their redemption - that was all finished. So with you, my reader; if you are a believer, your redemption is as finished as theirs was. Neither are you under law, but oh, how much present blessing depends on your hearkening diligently to the voice of the Lord. He is a rock that can never be moved, and His shadow the place of perfect security. But to sit at His feet, to hear diligently His words! And as He says, If ye love Me, keep My commands. Not as a servant under law, but as a son filled with the Spirit and moved by divine love. Most precious and necessary is this obedience of faith.

Elim was a sweet green spot in the wilderness, with its twelve wells of water and three score and ten palm trees. "And they encamped there by the waters" (Exod. 15:27). This reminds one of Jesus in the midst of His twelve apostles and seventy disciples. Wherever we see Him, He is the One to whom the thirsty may come and drink. May we ever encamp near the wells of living waters.

But I go on now to the wilderness of Sin (Ex. 16). Every step in the journey brings out the utter worthlessness of man and the sovereign grace of God. The whole congregation murmured sadly, and they said, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt. when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." This was very sad, but not more so than the terrible sin of unbelief that now so easily besets the believer. One would think that with such a bright future before us we should have no lingering looks at the world behind. What was God's answer to this murmuring? Amazing grace! "Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day," etc. And now it is worthy of a special remark, that the sabbath of Jehovah's rest was given before the law in connection with the eating of this bread from heaven. It was first given to Israel as privilege,

not by command or on the principle of law. And here the people rested on the seventh day, and I am not aware of another single instance where the people rested on the sabbath day. There is something very striking in this. From Adam to Moses, yes, to this very chapter, that is, for more than 2500 years, the Spirit never used the word sabbath, either in its root or in any of its forms. And here in the wilderness of Sin it is God's gift to His redeemed people in perfect grace. And on the principle of grace, before the law is given, they rest on the seventh day. Immediately they are under law, the Spirit never once repeats the words, They "rested on the sabbath day." I would not have you forget that God expressly gave Israel the sabbath on the ground of redemption - on that very account - as it is declared, "And remember that thou was a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out...: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." Deut. 5:15. Thus they had the sabbath because they were redeemed; but they only rested on it or enjoyed it by gathering the heavenly manna, and this on the principle of pure grace. Bread from heaven! Oh, may the Spirit of God open the understanding of my reader to see Christ, the Bread of Life, in all this.

Let it be well understood that the only ground on which God gives rest to the guilty sinner is through the redemption blood of Christ. Yes, He looks on that precious Lamb "who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 4:25; 5:1. "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7). This gives peace. This peace is God's gift in pure grace. As the sabbath was God's gift in grace to every Israelite, so this peace, this rest of God, is God's gift to every believer who has redemption through the blood of Christ. But then you say, If so, why do not I enter into this rest and enjoy peace with God? To that question this lesson of the wilderness is a solemn reply. Manna was a type of Christ as the Bread of Life. The redeemed from Egypt fed upon it, but they gathered a certain rate every day. Is this the case with you, my reader? Are you gathering the sweet manna, Christ, every day in His precious Word? If you had no time to eat your daily food, would you wonder if you were soon out of health? If you have no time to gather up the crumbs of life in the precious Word, is there any wonder that your spiritual life declines? Oh, read the sweet words of Jesus on this subject. He says, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." John 6:35. Do you thus come to Him for your daily portion?

Each Hebrew had an omer, about five pints, of manna - every man according to his eating. The greatest eater had no lack, and he that gathered most had none to spare. Just as with the lamb, every man according to his eating, so with the manna, every man according to his eating. Our deepest need as sinners was met by the blood of the Lamb; and the deepest daily need of our souls is met, if feeding on Christ. No doubt it is very blessed on the first day of the week to meet together to break bread - to remember Jesus - to show forth His broken body - to take that cup which shows forth His shed blood - by that one loaf to express the one body of Christ. Indeed, I would press this. But there is the daily portion - the constant need of the soul for spiritually feeding on Christ. In so short a paper I can only ask you to read John 6:30-71 in connection with this subject.

How very simple then this divine picture. God gave the bread from heaven. The redeemed Israelite gathered it. "A small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.... And they gathered it every morning." "It was... white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey." Oh, that

precious spotless Christ, so small and despised in the eyes of the world! But when the child of God gathers the manna in the morning, how refreshing the dew of the early dawn as the Spirit reveals Jesus to the soul in the blessed Word. And God gave them enough for the sabbath, and so they rested. God has given you rest, my fellow believer. Do you not enjoy it? Do you not rest? Then you have not gathered enough manna. Read the Word more. Think more on Christ. If the Israelite exclaimed, What is it? well may you say, What is it? - Christ my portion.

As God gave them twice as much as they could eat, they rested on the seventh day. Even so by the gift of His beloved Son He has more than met our utmost need. Thus they rested by gift, not by command. And thus in Christ we rest by grace, and not by works. Some did not believe, and went out to seek manna, but found none. So it is with us whenever we wander from God's eternal gift.

There was a great difference between having the sabbath and resting. There is a great difference between having peace with God and enjoying that peace. Would you enjoy that sweet rest in God? Then gather the manna - feed on Christ.

Oh, would you rest? Then grieve not that Holy Spirit by whom you are sealed. The taste of the manna was like wafers made with honey. And what is so sweet to the taste of a child of God as the fellowship of the Spirit in communion with Christ? O do, my young Christian, seek this holy, sweet enjoyment of Christ. Does the prospect of being forever with the Lord gladden your heart? Then earnestly seek for much communion with Him in spirit while here below.

The Will of God

"Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God" (Psalm 143:10). Surely the words of Theodore Monad apply with force in our day: "Ask yonder sun, What art thou doing? and he will answer, The will of God; those waves of ocean, and they will answer, The will of God; tiny flower, drinking in the dew, What art thou doing? and it will answer, The will of God."

But man, highest of God's creation, What art thou doing? Is not the answer this? "What I choose; I please myself; I do as I will, and assert my independence of God as though He were not." "Show me Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation." Psalm 25:4, 5.

A Wise Choice: That Good Part

Luke 10:42

There is a "part" which the Lord Himself calls "good"; and this, be it observed, is not salvation with all its blessings; neither is it service with all its rewards.

True, salvation delivers the soul from judgment and brings it to God; salvation relieves the soul from the awful load of sin and its consequences, placing it in the favor of God and giving it to rejoice in Him; salvation sets the soul free and fits it to render a service of love and thanksgiving, as the Apostle writes in Titus 2: "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Thus, grace not only brings salvation, but it likewise teaches the denial of our ungodliness and worldly lusts. It saves, and then leads the soul in paths of holiness, enabling it to serve in the joy and liberty of redemption.

But, however "good" salvation may be, or however blessed and becoming is the service that the saved and happy soul delights to render, there is yet another "good" which lies within the reach of that soul.

In the closing verses of the 10th chapter of Luke, we find the Lord Jesus a guest at the house of a certain woman called Martha. A beautiful scene! Not that the Lord declined the invitation of Simon the Pharisee, or refused to enter the house of Zacchaeus the publican; not that He disdained the feast of Levi, with its crowd of publicans and sinners; or again that He found no shelter in the house where Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever. We find Him in each of these houses suiting Himself to the circumstances of each, but in this Bethany house there is an air of friendliness, of homely and holy intimacy, or repose and freedom, that is not to be met with in the others. "The ever homeless Stranger" found more than a welcome there. Within this house He could reckon on one who found it her delight to serve Him, and, in His own words, to serve Him "much" too. He could also count on that which, as I have already suggested, is better than service, and which as the story declares is now highly appreciated by Him. Mary had chosen "that good part." And what is this good part if it be not salvation, and if it be better than service?

We read that Martha "had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word." It was the position and occupation of Mary that drew forth His praise. She placed herself at His feet, and sitting there she heard His word. But it was not so with Martha. She was equally dear to the Lord, but not equally near to Him. And this made all the difference. The place we hold in personal communion with Christ determines our spiritual character, and forms our spiritual status. Martha was occupied with His service - Mary with Himself. To serve Him is right indeed, but service must subserve communion. To be ever occupied with service is to become "careful and

troubled about many things"; but to abide in heart communion with the Master - to sit at His feet and hear His word - is to make choice of "that good part, which shall not be taken away." And surely, beloved, in a day of much widespread religious activity as the present - unprecedented perhaps since the times of the apostles - when the door is widely opened of the Lord - is there not the danger of quantity rather than quality marking our services? The surface is broad, but is the character of the work proportionately deep? Are we looking for extent or reality? Is there not room for pride when we can tabulate large results? Have we grasped in our souls the truth of Luke 14:25-35: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple"? Have we in spirit and in truth entered ourselves into such discipleship?

But then what is the secret of all this? If there be much service with little fruit that is pleasing to Him - if, as in another day, there be much sowing and little brought in that really bears the stamp of His approval - where can we find the key to that spiritual sacrifice that is acceptable to God?

Grace instructed Mary, and she discovered that key. It lay at Jesus' feet, and she accordingly laid herself there. Let us trace, chiefly, the result of her career.

In John 11 we again find her "down at His feet." While her more restless sister had gone to meet the Lord on His approach to Bethany, Mary "sat still in the house" and calmly awaited the Master's call. When it sounded she "rose up hastily and went out.... She fell down at His feet," and there, may I say, found herself at home. She did not need to retire from His presence. She had learned the blessedness of being there.

She could tarry beside Him and let Him unfold His tenderest thoughts and feelings. Oh! the blessedness of that seat! Oh! how rich are the unfoldings of divine love and truth to the soul that has found its abode there.

I will quote one more episode in Mary's life. In John 12 we have the crowning act of her truly acquired intelligence. The feast is spread before Him. His disciples are also present. Martha, true to her character, serves; Lazarus sits at meat; but Mary takes a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anoints the feet of Jesus, and wipes His feet with her hair, and the house is filled with the odor of the ointment. So rich a libation appeared prodigal and superfluous in the covetous eyes of Judas Iscariot. He would rather have seen the ointment turned into money and then given to the poor. Judas was a would-be philanthropist, "not that he cared for the poor," still less for the Lord, but money was his idol, and the love of it, his curse. At any rate, Mary's deeply significant action was nothing more in his estimation than a "waste." Poor man, blind as he was to all that was spiritual, how totally unconscious was he of the intense delight that this sacrifice occasioned to the Lord. "Let her alone," said Jesus, "against the day of my burying hath she kept this."

But which of His disciples had apprehended the fact of His burial? Had the beloved John or the bold and energetic Peter? No, Mary alone had matured this solemn truth, and the faith which she had gathered at His feet now shone conspicuously. She alone entered into the truth of His death and burial; and now she anoints His feet with ointment, and wipes them with the hair of her head. She lays her glory at His feet.

A beautiful history is that of Mary. On each occasion, whether in Luke 10, John 11, or 12, we find her "at His feet," and therefore the quality of her service was exceedingly rich. She had found the secret of true service. She had learned that quality is to be valued above quantity. She engaged

her affections with the Lord Jesus Himself, and found her fruit from Him.

I do not seek to discountenance quantity. Far be the thought. Can we do too much? Look around on the broad fields that are "white already to harvest." Harken to a hundred Macedonian cries that re-echo in our ears. Shame upon us that our feet are so tardy and our tongues so fettered. O for energy of heart and soul in seeking the salvation of the lost multitudes around us, and for the blessing of the lambs and sheep of our Shepherd's flock. Can we not say,

"My heart is full of Christ, and longs

My glorious Master to declare;

Of Him I'd make my loftiest strains;

I cannot from His praise forbear."

But what I seek to advocate and press on myself and on all is that we should habituate ourselves to "the feet of Jesus"; to that place of self-renunciation and self-concealment; to that place of divine enlightenment and surest blessing; to that place of divine power; so that it may be less a question of giving to the poor, whatever claim they may have upon us, than one of doing it "unto Me."

If only our object be right, our service will not be wrong. If the eye be single, the whole body will be full of light, and this is needed.

The Lord give us to choose "that good part, which shall not be taken away."

The Word Made Flesh

John 1

There is one remark that furnishes a most important key to the Gospel of John, which is illustrated very simply and manifestly in this first chapter.

The object of the Holy Spirit is to assert the personal glory of Jesus; and hence it is that there is not perhaps a single chapter in the New Testament that presents our Lord in so many different aspects, yet all personal, as the opening chapter of this gospel.

His divine glory is carefully guarded. He is said in the most distinguished language to be God as to His nature, but withal a man. He is God no less than the Father is, or the Holy Spirit; but He is the Word in a way in which the Father and the Holy Spirit were not.

It was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who alone was the word of God. He only after a personal sort expressed God. The Father and the Holy Spirit remained in their own unseeable majesty.

The Word had for His place to express God clearly; and this belonged to Him, it is evident, as a distinctive personal glory. It was not merely that He was the Word when He came into the world, but "In the beginning was the Word" when there was no creature.

Before anything came into being that was made, the Word "was in the beginning with God"; not merely in God, as if merged, or lost in God, but He had a distinct personal subsistence before any creature existed. He "was in the beginning with God." This is of immense importance, and with these truths our gospel opens.

Then we find His creation glory stated afterward: "All things were made by Him."

There is nothing which more stamps God to be God than giving existence to that which had none, causing it to exist by His own will and power. Now, all things exist by the Word; and so emphatically true is this that the Spirit has added, "And without Him was not anything made that was made." But there was that which belonged to the Lord Jesus that was not made: "In Him was life." It was not only that He could cause a life to exist that had not existed before, but there was a life that belonged to Him from all eternity. "In Him was life." Not that this life began to be, for it was eternal. All else, all creation, began to be, and it was He that gave them the commencement of their existence. But "in Him was life," a life that was not created, a life that therefore was divine in its nature.

It was the reality and the manifestation of this life which were of prime importance to man. Everything else that had been since the beginning of the world was only a creature; but "in Him was life." Man was destined to have the display of this life on earth. But it was in Him before He came among men. The life was not called "the light" of angels, but "of men."

Nowhere do we find that eternal life is created. The angels are never said to have life in the Son of God. Theirs is a purely creature life, whereas it is a wonderful fact of revelation that we who

believe are possessors of the eternal life that was

in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and are therefore said to be partakers of the divine nature. This is in no way true of an angel.

It is not that we for a moment cease to be creatures, but we have what is above the creature in Christ the Son of God.

Work Out Your Own Salvation

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12) - not your own forgiveness, but your own salvation. It is said to those who were already forgiven. Salvation, in the sense spoken of there, implies the whole conflict with the power of evil we are passing through. We know that we have to do with the common enemy, but God is at work in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). We know the deep concern and regard which God feels for us, as committed to this conflict. We are fighting under His orders - doing His will in that thing as well as in others. So far is God from leaving us in any way, that He assures our souls He is pledged to see us through to the end, but He will have us have a solemn sense of the war with Satan in which we are engaged.

Be Ye Steadfast, Unmoveable

1 Cor. 15:58

If our hearts are not close to Christ, we are apt to get weary in the way.

All is a vain show around us, but that which is inside abides and is true, being the life of Christ. All else goes! When the heart gets hold of this fact, it becomes (as to things around) like one taken into a house to work for the day, who performs the duties well, but passes through instead of living in the circumstances. To Israel, the cloud came down, and they stayed; it lifted up, and on they went. It was all the same to them. Why? Because had they stayed when the cloud went on, they would not have had the Lord. One may be daily at the desk for fifty years, yet with Christ the desk is only the circumstance; it is the doing God's will, making manifest the savor of Christ, which is the simple and great thing. Whether I go or you go - I stay or you stay - may that one word be realized in each of us - "steadfast, unmoveable." In whatever sphere, as matter of providence, we may be found, let the divine life be manifested. This abides; all else changes; but the life remains and abides forever; yes, forever.

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

Address to Young People

"Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." Gal. 1:3, 4.

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Phil. 3:7.

In Galatians we get the twofold work of Christ, first in giving Himself for our sins. No one can be a true Christian without realizing the truth that Christ gave Himself for our sins. That is the foundation of all. But it is thoroughly possible and sadly true that there are many who know this, that do not likewise know that He gave Himself "that He might deliver us from this present evil world." It is a sad thing that we have so many of God's children who adore Him as Savior and yet do not learn in their souls that the same blessed One gave Himself that He might "deliver us from this present evil world." Of course we know as to the work of Christ in its efficacy, every one of those who have known redemption will be delivered from this scene - will be delivered from this present evil age "for He is faithful that promised." When that hour comes, the Lord Jesus steps forth in the air to receive those for whom He has been waiting. He will by power take everyone who has "tasted that the Lord is gracious" out of this scene, and the poor creature whose heart is in this scene will be taken out of it in spite of himself.

When the hour comes, regardless of where His own are found, however deeply immersed in the world, He is going to take His own to be with Himself, and power will do what grace has failed to do. He will then deliver every child of God from this present evil age. We will be out of reach eternally of all those things which would seek to drag us down now and would seek to give the lie to our profession of belonging to Him who has gone out of this world.

What would be the effect of that with us? The Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins; that is the starting point of all. It is where you and I found ourselves in our sins, poor, lost, wicked, rebel sinners, without one good thing to plead before Him. It is where we all started, all on the same level. We heard His voice: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and dear fellow believer, you and I came to Jesus, and we confessed our sins to Him. We owned to Him all the awful things we had done, and in His grace He just pardoned the whole thing, and He received us and gave us rest to our souls. His precious blood cleansed away our sins, and Oh! we adore Him! He won our hearts! He became our Savior! You and I have peace today as the result of what the blessed Savior has done for us.

The question I want to bring before us practically, is this - has the power of the love -of Christ in our hearts delivered "us from this present evil world"? It is an important thing for us to get hold of that. It is a good thing to get thoroughly established, and to get thoroughly convinced that you and I are living in an evil world, pronounced so by the blessed Son of God Himself. Isn't it sad that we see so many fine young Christians that are so far from the mind of God as to this world, that they are dedicating their lives to what they think will make this world a better place? Their ambition is to

make it a good place and they are devoting their lives to bettering the world. Suppose they succeed in what they are trying to do, what would be the result? They would make the first chapter of Galatians and the fourth verse untrue. To find out that this is an evil world will save us a lot of lost energy. What a lot there are in Christendom today, dear earnest young Christians exerting themselves and giving their time and labor to do things God never told them to do, trying to accomplish things which, if accomplished, would make Scripture untrue.

Some of the young people on Washington Square last night got to see the rough side of life. They realized, perhaps as never before, what the heart of man is capable of. Perhaps it was an eye-opener to see really how far the heart of man can go in rebellion to God. The Word of God told us that long ago. The lid is kept on, and there is a certain amount of respectability about the world, but it does not alter it, and underneath it all is the heart of man which is enmity against God. Underneath is the evil work, and it only takes the hand of God to remove the lid. This world is yet to have another demonstration of what kind of world it is. It has had one already. That was at Calvary's cross. One of these days the Lord is coming to take out of this world, His prized Church, and when they go to meet the Lord in the air, the Holy Spirit, the restraining influence is going to go. Then what happens? We see what was held down beneath the surface all the time. We see it manifest itself. We find possibly millions arrayed in open rebellion against God. We find man lifting himself up to the place where he actually says he is God. Can you imagine a condition like that? The declared warfare of poor man against the Son of God and the armies of heaven.

It is a good thing to get thoroughly established in this line of truth. Dear young people that have your life before you, if the Lord Jesus should tarry, your whole life is going to be affected by the attitude you take toward this world. Your whole Christian life will be affected by whether or not you regard this as an evil, doomed world, waiting for the execution of God's judgment on it, or whether you regard it as the world subject to improvement. It is a good thing to get God's estimate of this world before you cast your life into it.

The Lord Jesus died and gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world. The Apostle Paul is the most blessed example of one who realized as perhaps none other has, really what this world is. He estimated it at its true value, as he viewed it in the light of "that day" when he was going to be with the Lord Jesus; he pronounced the whole thing but refuse. He counted it all loss for Christ. You and I were not in the least sorry when the delivering power of Christ came into our lives and freed us from all those sinful things which we used to go on with. We do not long for the old carnal pleasures which we indulged in our unconverted days. The gambler who was delivered from the gambling table does not look back and long to be back in the throes of that awful habit. But what the Apostle says is "what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." There is no gain to a man's being a drunkard, nor being a gambler, but what is the line of things that are gain? According to this third chapter of Philippians it was what Paul had as a natural man in this world, in the way of worldly temporal advantages. It was his family, his education and his standing, his position and his influence, all that he possessed and of which he could boast. Nothing he needed to be ashamed of and yet he says he "counted" those things but "loss."

I believe right in that line of things there is something searching for our hearts. There is nothing more natural to a young person and I suppose to all, but particularly to a young person, than

ambition. From the time you entered your school life down to the present time you have heard lecture after lecture, and talk after talk, seeking to stir you up to be ambitious, and you have success put before you as something to be desired. Your ambition has been kindled and you have had success held before you as the only right goal. Bring this to the light of the Word of God. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." The Lord Jesus has given Himself for you. You committed the keeping of your souls to Him, and He has given Himself that "He might deliver us from this present evil world." If that transaction has taken place between you and the Lord Jesus, there has been an agreement entered into, perhaps not expressed but implied. That agreement is that the blessed One who died on Calvary's cross has now not only become your Savior but your Lord, and as your Lord He possesses authority over you. He has absolute right and title to your heart. You have been purchased. You "are not your own." You are purchased from the claims of this world and you now belong to Christ.

No doubt you have power of one kind or another over those things that are peculiarly your own, those things that make you an individual character. The question before your soul is, is the attractiveness of Christ sufficient for your soul to lay that down at His feet and say, "Lord Jesus, I want you to have all, all that I possess, all that I am. I want to be wholly at your disposal, and I want to be ambitious for nothing but this one thing, that I might be well pleasing to Thee." It is going to spoil us for the world. Our faith in Christ and our practically laying hold of the Lord Jesus as the One who has delivered us spoils us for the world. But blessed be God! What does that amount to in comparison with "that day" which is near at hand, when we are going to stand before that blessed One "who gave Himself... that He might deliver us from this present evil world." We will not regret then that we gave everything into His care, and we will have one ambition and one desire that we might be found well-pleasing to Him.

This may be using a pretty sharp knife on ourselves; there may be some cutting off to do; there may be a change in our course in a good many ways. But dear young Christian, He may be here at any moment.

How easy it is for us to lend an ear to the world in its flattery as it seeks to drag us into that line which makes success and popularity in this world. It is natural, but when we realize that it is an evil world, and that that blessed One gave Himself to deliver us, it shows a different face on the whole matter. In the light of that coming day how am I planning? Am I planning to make my life a success, or to be found to His praise and honor? That is the only ambition for the Christian. The Christian has no business to be the most popular or most successful man or woman in this life. Another One has claim over him now, and he has but to please that One, regardless of his talents or gifts. They must all be put down at the feet of that blessed One. We will be glad in that day for whatever sacrifice we have made for Him. At this time the Christian's life is a hidden life. It is hid with Christ in God. It is unknown now, the world does not know, but it will not always be so. One of these days we are going to be manifested, we are going to be displayed. The Lord is going to show us forth in full power, and we will be displayed before this poor world. Are you satisfied to live a hidden life in Christ? Are you content to live as unknown? Are you content to pass quietly through this world that the approval of that blessed One whom you profess to serve may rest upon you? That is the secret in going through this life, living in the sense that He is coming. We will not cause much of a stir down here. We will never set the world on fire. We will perhaps pass through it unknown. But blessed be God! we can pass through it as our blessed Savior did, the rejected

Man. Should a servant be greater than his Lord?

May the Lord give us grace in the light of that day, to count all things but loss, even the things that were gain, but loss for Christ.

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