

CHRISTIAN TRUTH VOLUME 32

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 32, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

114 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Christian Truth Volume 32
1. 1 Peter 2
2. 2 Corinthians 3:18
3. Abolition of Capital Punishment
4. All Things Are Ours
5. All Things Are Yours
6. As a Feather Flies
7. As He Is
8. Behold, I Come Quickly
9. Benjamin's Blessing
10. The Blessed Hope: Great White Throne and Eternal State
11. The Blessed Hope: Is It a Present or Deferred Hope?
12. The Blessed Hope: Judgment Seat of Christ
13. The Blessed Hope: Marriage Supper of the Lamb
14. The Blessed Hope: Rapture of the Saints
15. The Blessed Hope: Restoration of the Jews
16. The Blessed Hope: the Apostasy and the Antichrist
17. The Blessed Hope: the Appearing of Christ
18. The Blessed Hope: the Great Tribulation
19. The Blessed Hope: the Hope of the Church
20. The Blessed Hope: the Kingdom of Christ
21. The Blessed Hope: the New Jerusalem
22. Bring All
23. Christ for Our Circumstances
24. Christ in the Path
25. Christ Preached
26. Christian Experience: Christ Our Life
27. Christian Experience: Pattern, Object, Hope, Strength
28. Christian Obedience
29. Christian Position, Service, Worship
30. The Cleansing of the Leper
31. To Cover Sins
32. Creation and Salvation
33. Dead and Buried
34. Difference Between Grace and Mercy
35. The Power of the Name of Jesus
36. Discipline
37. Discontent and Its Results
38. Dying Alone

39. Ephesians 1
40. An Old Word of Exhortation
41. Explanations
42. Faith
43. Faith, Not Discussion
44. Faithfulness
45. Fear Not
46. Fellowship, Full Joy, and Cleansing
47. A Full Presentation of Christ
48. Glorified
49. The God of Peace
50. God's Love Shed Abroad
51. Gold
52. Grace Be With You
53. The Hand of God Upon His Own
54. Hearing and Following
55. Hebrews: the Epistle
56. Himself
57. In Everything
58. Infidelity: Certain of Nothing but Uncertainty
59. Inspired
60. The Invisible
61. John 25:9
62. Jude 21
63. Little by Little
64. The Living Link With a Living Christ
65. The Lord's Message: the Lord's Messenger
66. The Loveliness of Christ
67. Make Straight Paths
68. The Mystery of Godliness
69. Nebuchadnezzar: Head of Gold
70. The New or the Old
71. No Ending
72. Nobility Obligates
73. Nothing Like the Cross
74. Obedience
75. Our Heavenly Portion
76. Our Position
77. Pardon Mine Iniquity; for It Is Great
78. The Passover and the Red Sea
79. Peace and My Peace
80. Perfect in Christ

- 81.** The Prodigal and the Father's Love
- 82.** Thoughts on Psalm 67
- 83.** Reconciliation
- 84.** Redemption
- 85.** Redemption of Purchased Possession
- 86.** Rest
- 87.** Return
- 88.** The River of His Grace
- 89.** A Saint at Marah
- 90.** The Scriptures
- 91.** The Secret of the Lord
- 92.** Shoes of Iron
- 93.** The Solid Rock
- 94.** Some Mountain Top Scenes: a Short Review
- 95.** The Source of Blessing
- 96.** The Star
- 97.** The Straight Gate
- 98.** Success
- 99.** The Syrian Leper
- 100.** That They May Know My Service
- 101.** Transportation
- 102.** Treasure in Earthen Vessels
- 103.** Truth in Books Not Merely in Books
- 104.** Unbelief
- 105.** Waiting
- 106.** Walk Circumspectly
- 107.** Walking With God
- 108.** The Way of Salvation From Evil
- 109.** What We Have, Who Received Christ
- 110.** We Know - Language of Faith
- 111.** What Is the Camp? Part 1
- 112.** What Is the Camp? Part 2
- 113.** What Seek Ye?

Christian Truth Volume 32

1 Peter 2

The second chapter of 1 Peter opens very remarkably. To these persons (mentioned in the first chapter) who had obeyed the truth and were born again, he writes that they should lay aside all malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and evil speakings. What! is it possible that true Christians can have these things? Certainly, or they would not be told to lay them aside, for the new birth is not an alteration of the old evil nature, but is something additional -"a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17; J.N.D. Trans.) Hence our Lord said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Here are two natures. The malice, guile, etc., are the actings of the old nature, and they must be laid aside. It is very humbling to feel that we still have such things, but it is too true; and in order for growth (mark, not security, but Christian progress, growth in grace), these evil lusts and workings much be laid aside, and the Word of God constantly fed upon. If malice, guile, etc., are not laid aside, the Spirit will be grieved, and there will be little or no appetite for the truth. By disallowing evil, and drinking in the Word as a newborn child does the milk, there will be Growth. And as the Word of God always leads the heart to Christ, because it testifies of Christ, so will the soul thus feeding be brought into constant association with Christ. Hence the next words, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." It is impossible, perhaps, to overrate the importance of this truth in the present day of looseness and indifference. If then there would be growth, spiritual progress, in a soul who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, there must be laying aside of the lusts of the flesh, a drinking in the sincere milk of the Word, and personal intercourse with Christ Himself. Let us seriously ponder these three things.

But further-every Christian is a priest. In the next verse we read, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood." The upward action of spiritual life and energy will be in offering "up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." The outward action of the Christian we find in the ninth verse to be expressing Christ, living Christ, showing "forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

The result of all this knowledge of Christ is such fellowship with Him as to make us feel that we are strangers here where He had no rest; a stranger where He was, and still is, rejected -where He could say, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Matt. 8:20. A Christian is necessarily a pilgrim also, because he is going home. He is hasting on to the possession of the heart's dearest object. The knowledge of Christ necessarily makes him long to see and be with Him.

" 'Tis the treasure I've found in His love, That has made me a pilgrim below."

May we know what it is, not only to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory in Him whom having not seen we love, but looking to Him, abiding in Him, holding personal intercourse with Him, our soul may gratefully worship, faithfully serve and honor God, and take our true place as not of the world, but strangers and pilgrims who cannot be fully satisfied till we are with Him and like Him in glory.

2 Corinthians 3:18

What soul in nature ever thought it worth while to sit down and muse over the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? But a quickened soul knows that face to be covered with glory. Oh, when one turns and sees the radiancy of the light of the glory of God in the face of the Lord Jesus, one must have something of the divine mind, or one could not enter into it. It is God who has given the power to the believer to see the glory of God in that face.,

The Apostle Paul felt it was a great thing to keep saints in occupation with that glory, beholding it with open face. Are you occupied with it? Surely Christians have their world as well as the men of the earth—a world in which that face of Jesus Christ is seen unveiled; and there is no disappointment connected with it as the heart's object. That face entirely satisfied the heart of Paul. He was one of all others who had the greatest sight of that unveiled face. The light of the glory of that face never passes away. Having had it unveiled, it leaves something in the soul as a deposit. It shines into the heart that we may be changed into the same glory from glory to glory. A certain assimilating power is put forth, so that the soul—as He unfolds and develops it—passes from glory to glory. A seed will germinate after two thousand years, and we may see the plant unfolding; and the glory of the plant is quite a different thing from the seed. What is given to the believer is the incorruptible seed, which, after it is received; gives perfect rest for eternity to the soul; but it has to work and it goes on gradually unfolding in the believer what was received from Christ, changing him into the same image from glory to glory. Not by his own faithfulness, but the faithfulness of that Christ, watching the seed of His own planting, and gradually unfolding that which He had communicated, to make the expression of what He had given, the rule of the life.

He was the One to fill the woman of Samaria's heart, but it is He who must supply the water springing up into eternal life. That is His present work among His people, and the certainty that they have Him working with them is one of their greatest securities as they go through the world. To be able to say, I have received of Him the incorruptible seed which nothing can destroy or pluck out, and He Himself is watching over it night and day. What a thought, that there is One at God's right hand dealing with poor things down here, because He has pledged His word that all who believe in Him have eternal life, and that none shall pluck them out of His hand. They shall not come into judgment. Can the head judge,—the members? My feet may get soiled by my careless walk down here, and they ought not to be so; Christ will wash them again and again, but He does not judge me. I have been quickened and raised up together with Him, and that identifies me with heaven and the center of heaven itself, for it makes me a part of His body.

We want something to link our hearts up there with the Lord—the constraining power which Paul felt. The love of Christ should be the constraint upon us as to our walk, and this is the simple doctrine of being co-planted with Christ.

Abolition of Capital Punishment

The abolition of capital punishment should be noted in the light of the Holy Scriptures; then it will be seen to be a mark of these last days. It is a part of a trend that is leading up to a scene of confusion and carnage which will precede the "day of the Lord."

Capital punishment was instituted after the flood; God said to Noah, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Gen. 9:6. This was not an idea that originated with Noah, but a divine command, and by it God placed the sword of government on earth in the hands of man. Prior to the flood there was no government on earth, and men became utterly lawless; corruption and violence filled the scene (Gen. 6:11).

The human race had followed a downward course from the day that Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden; this was climaxed in a world of horrible and unthinkable moral corruption and human bloodshedding. Hence God intervened and cleansed the earth with the deluge, while He preserved Noah and his family alive in the ark. By them God gave man a fresh start, and the moral government of the earth was henceforth to be exercised under divine decree. This has never been abrogated, and "the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1).

The sentimentalists who argue against capital punishment on the grounds of its flagrant abuse in times past are using one evil as an excuse for another. Some contend that innocent people have been executed on flimsy circumstantial evidence, but the Word of God in the days of Israel specifically guarded against such a thing happening. "Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die." Numb. 35:30. In any matter of dispute, "At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deut. 19:15).

God also carefully distinguished between involuntary manslaughter and murder, and made special arrangements for cities of refuge in the land of Canaan where the manslayer might flee and be safe from those who would avenge the accidental death. (Read Numb. 35, and Josh. 20 and 21). But one who was guilty of deliberate murder was to die, and no satisfaction of any kind was to be taken in lieu of the life of the murderer (Numb. 35:31).

While these principles are good and right in the ordering of the governments on earth, they do have a special significance in regard to the death of the Lord Jesus. We all know how He was maltreated and then crucified, and how His own people clamored for His death; yet when He was about to die on the cross He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34. In this prayer He was attributing His death at their hands to an unwitting and not a premeditated act; He was making it a case of manslaughter and not of murder. How exceedingly gracious this was, for it supposes that they smote their neighbor "unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime." Josh. 20:5. Yet was it not true that they had hated both Him and His Father (John 15:24)? Were it not for this pleading of the Lord on the ground of ignorance, there would have been no hope for Israel. On the contrary, the gospel which was to be preached after His death and

resurrection was to begin at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47).

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, preached the gospel to the Jews in Jerusalem, and in so doing held the gates of the "city of refuge" open to them, and the 3,000 who confessed their sin and believed on the Lord Jesus that day were brought into the Church, as into the city of refuge. They were thereby saved from the fate which awaited the unrepentant part of the people who were to perish by the sword of the Romans, called in Matt. 22:7, "His armies." Peter, again preaching to them, said, "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Acts 3:17.

The manslayer was to remain in the city of refuge "unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil" (Numb. 35:25). This indefinite length of time brings before us in a remarkable way this whole period of the Church on earth, for while the Church is here the Lord Jesus remains as our Great High Priest in the heavens. Consequently, the only way of escape for a Jew is to believe on Him (the Gentile, too, being saved only through Him) and thus get into the Church. When the Lord Jesus, the High Priest, comes out from the holiest, it will be to take up Israel as a people again. His death will be the basis of all blessing then as it is now.

The abolition of the death penalty for premeditated murder will only help pave the way for the wave of lawlessness which is coming, for coming events are nearly always preceded by preparatory developments. When the rider on the "red horse" appears (after we are gone to be with Christ) peace will be taken from the earth, and they shall "kill one another" (Rev. 6:4). Even today there is growing lawlessness, and the incidence of homicidal killings is on the increase; the removal of the fear of the death penalty as a deterrent will accelerate the dreadful conditions. Luke 17:26 lets us know that the character of the days of Noah, when life was cheap and unsafe due to violence filling the earth, is to reappear before the coming of the Son of man.

While the placing of earthly government in the hands of man has never been rescinded, it is rather remarkable that nowhere in the New Testament is there any instruction how the Christian should conduct himself in the place of authority. Not once is the Christian exhorted how to govern as a Christian. Surely this is no oversight. On the other hand, the Christian is exhorted how to behave himself toward those who are in authority. He is to submit to every law "for the Lord's sake," to obey magistrates and be subject to the powers that be. He is to pay his taxes, not because he cannot avoid doing so, but for conscience toward God. He is to recognize in the administrator of the law, the minister of God to him for good (1 Pet. 2:13, 14; Rom. 13:1-6). He is also to pray for all those in authority (1 Tim. 2:2). (We must always, however, keep in mind that our first allegiance is to God, and that should the government demand us to do that which His Word forbids us to do—for instance, to deny Christ—we must obey God and suffer the consequences).

While there is no New Testament instruction on how a Christian should govern now, it does suppose a day when the Christian shall reign: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you... Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" 1 Cor. 6:2, 3. It is evident from the Scriptures that God did not intend for Christians to seek to judge the world, but to be law-abiding subjects, just waiting for the Lord Jesus to come and take them home.

When the Apostle Paul sought to correct the life of leisure and indulgence in which the Corinthian saints were living, he said, "Ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign,

that we also might reign with you." 1 Cor. 4:8. The day for the Christians to reign had not come, for if it had, Paul would be reigning with them. The Christian who seeks to straighten out this world and engage in politics has missed this important lesson. He is as much out of place as Lot was when he sat as a judge in the gate of the city of Sodom. Lot had his righteous soul "vexed from day to day."

It is true that there are Christians in the place of authority, who seek to act righteously before God; but their conduct in the exercise of power, if governed by scriptural principles, must be done on the basis of the Old Testament and not of the New. In the latter, the saint on earth is looked at as a stranger and a pilgrim, just passing through the world. The more that Christians seek a place in the world where they can exercise power, the more they have mixed earthly government and Judaism with the heavenly calling of the Christian; then the distinctive character of each is lost.

But we should not fail to discern the signs of these times when everything indicates the close proximity of the coming of the Lord. The world is being readied for those dreadful closing days of "man's day," but our release here and our being with Christ is ever drawing nearer. P.W.

" 'A little while'-the Lord shall come,
And we shall wander here no more;
He'll take us to His Father's home,
Where He for us is gone before-
To dwell with Him, to see His face,
And sing the glories of His grace.
" 'A little while'-He'll come again;
Let us the precious hours redeem;
Our only grief to give Him pain,
Our joy to serve and follow Him.
Watching and ready may we be,
As those that wait their Lord to see.
" 'A little while' - 'twill soon be past,
Why should we shun the promised cross?
O let us in His footsteps haste,
Counting for Him all else but loss;
For how will recompense His smile
The suff'rings of this 'little while.'
'A little while'-come, Savior, come!

For Thee Thy bride has tarried long:
Take Thy poor waiting pilgrims home,
To sing the new eternal song,
To see Thy glory and to be
In ev'ry thing conformed to Thee!"

All Things Are Ours

Every possible glory indeed is ours. The blessedness that is in God Himself, as far as it can be communicated, for we dwell in God and God in us. Relative blessedness, for we are children. Associated blessedness, in union with the blessed One, for we are the bride. Official nearness and glory, for we are kings and priests. Human blessedness, for we shall be perfect men, after the image of the last Adam. Corporate blessedness, for we shall have joy together. Individual, for we shall have a name given which no one knows but he that receives it; and we shall have the fullness of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, unhindered by these poor bodies, yea, clothed upon by a vessel suited to the power of the Divine Inhabitant, so as to be able in full largeness of heart to enjoy all this.

All Things Are Yours

1 Cor. 3:21

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

I was asked one day to go and see a poor old woman who had for many years lived quite alone. "And now," said her neighbor, "she is dying alone, and I have my children to mind, and can only see her once a day."

Circumstances prevented my going just at once to see her, but those two words, "dying alone," rang in my ears and seemed to haunt me from day to day. To live alone appeared to me sad enough, but to die alone seemed the very depth of human misery. I was young, but had known sorrow, and had stood by several deathbeds. I had watched the last breath flicker out by the bedside of both rich and poor, but none of them had died alone. My own friends were surrounded by every luxury and comfort; everything that love could plan to make the sick-room cheerful and smooth the dying pillow was done by cheerful hands; and many cherished ones softly glided in and out with words of comfort and sympathy. I had stood, too, by the dying beds of the poor, and had watched with admiration how every nerve had been strained to provide comforts for the sick one out of the hard-earned wages; and kind neighbors were ever ready to come in and share the weary night-watch. But now a new phase of suffering presented itself—one I had not heard of before. And I oft repeated those dismal words, "dying alone!" Death on the battlefield amidst the dying and slain, or death in the crowded wards of a hospital, seemed comfort to me compared to this, and I even prayed, "Lord, may I never die alone."

Nearly a week after this I found myself on the way to see the poor creature I did not even know by name, but whose circumstances called for my deepest sympathy—"dying alone!" It was a very low door by which I entered a very small dark room; the window, but one pane of glass, scarcely giving sufficient light to show distinctly the few objects in that chamber; and it was with a feeling akin to awe I went up to the low bed in the corner and gazed upon that aged woman dying alone! It was a calm and pleasant face, though much furrowed and wrinkled by care and years; her silvery hair was parted upon her brow, and her white cap and sheets showed no signs of neglect; yet she was dying alone!

"Sit down, Miss," she said with a kindly smile; my neighbors told me you would come some day, but I thought likely I would be gone home before you came; but now I hope you have brought me some good word about the Lord."

"I have His Word in my pocket," I said.

"Ah! that's well; His own Word is better than anything we can say. Read for me please."

As I turned from passage to passage of the blessed Book, her aged eyes beamed, and her whole soul seemed to drink in the precious words; and as I prayed with her before leaving, she joined with me in every petition. As I parted from her, I expressed my surprise that she could be so full of peace and joy when dying alone.

"Christ is with me," she said, "and when you have known Him as long as I have known Him, and proved His love as long, you will not wonder. I've known Him more than twenty years, and I've lived much of that time alone with Him; and now I've been dying these six months past, alone with Him, for few come to see me, and there's few I care to see, for I've Christ always with me, and there's no solitude in that."

I came away from that humble dwelling with very different thoughts from those with which I had entered it. God had a new lesson for me through His aged saint. Her calm face and joyful answer, "Christ is with me," opened up to me depths in Him hitherto unknown; for though I knew Him as my Savior and Friend, He was not as yet everything to me. I saw this aged servant of Christ many times after this, and learned from her what I believe I have never forgotten. One day she told me that she had asked the Lord, if it were His will, that someone might be with her when she breathed her last.

"Why?" I asked, thinking she was dreading to die alone.

"Because, if no one saw me die, they would not know I was as happy to die as to live; for Christ is with me now, and shall be with me then, and I shall be with Him forever."

Each day, as I left her, I saw she was passing quickly to her desired haven. She had few earthly comforts save those the Lord privileged me to take her; yet she was full of joy and thankfulness and unclouded peace.

One day I knocked as usual at the door, but got no answer. "Oh," I said, "has she died alone?" With breathless anxiety I opened the door; her hands were clasped, her lips moved in prayer. I stood in silence till her eyes opened and she saw me.

"You've come to see me die," she said. "Sit down. If it was not for others, I would rather be alone with Christ, but you'll stay till the end."

Then in thoughtfulness for me she said, "Oh, but you are young, and you may not like to see anyone die."

"Yes," I said, "I should like to be with you." Pointing to her well-worn Bible she said, "Read once more the last verses of Rom. 8"

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

As I closed the Book, I was about to ask her if I should pray. I observed a slight movement of the eyelids, she gazed upwards, a radiant smile lit up her features, and her happy spirit was with the Lord. I knelt and closed her eyes, drew the sheet over the pale face of death, came out, locked the

door, and having made a few arrangements with her neighbor as to her remains, I returned home.

The lessons learned in that little room were precious to me. Dear reader, have you learned anything from reading this simple account of one who was truly satisfied with Christ? Can you say, "This is the Christ I have got. He is everything to me, if called to live alone; everything to me if called to die alone. A Christ who is above, and beyond, and over every earthly circumstance—a Christ who thoroughly satisfies my heart?"

As a Feather Flies

You may have heard the story of the young man who spread a criticism (which later proved only half true) about an older brother that caused much grief in the assembly. He later apologized and asked the old man what he could do to atone for his wrong. The old brother grabbed a feather pillow under his arm and took the boy to the top of the hill. Wind tugged at their hair and flapped their coats against their legs as they looked down at the village and fields below. The offended brother handed the young man the pillow.

"Rip it open," he said.

The boy was perplexed. But he did what he was told. Instantly the wind seized the feathers, tossing them in flurries out into the air. A cloud of feathers whirled about their heads, then spread far and wide as thousands of feathers began falling beyond the village, settling on sidewalks, in hedges, in streams, in trees, among deep grass.

"Now," said the older man, "go and collect all the feathers and put them back in the pillow."

"All of them?"

"All of them!"

"But that's impossible."

Placing his hand on the young boy's shoulder, the brother said kindly, "I know. I just wanted you to realize how impossible it is to retrieve a criticism once made."

When you are tempted to criticize another person, remember this story.

"A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." Pro. 11:13.

"THY WORD HAVE I HID IN MINE HEART, THAT I MIGHT NOT SIN AGAINST THEE."

Psalm 119:11.

As He Is

God's perfect love casts out fear, for "As He is, so are we in this world." Look at these nine monosyllables. Exactly as Christ is, so is the Christian. When he dies? No. When he has attained to a state of perfection? No. "In this world." I know nothing sweeter to the heart than to see that peerless Man who was in death, but has gone back to heaven, at the right hand of God; and God says, "As He is, so are we in this world." See Him, the Father's delight from all eternity. How is He? Is He on the other side of death? So are we. Is He where no sin can touch Him? So are we. Is He the Father's delight? So are we. If you believe this, you will have life, peace, power, and boldness in the day of judgment. I shall be at His side in that day. He is the One who took my judgment on the cross.

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?"

He has given us His place-"As He is, so are we in this world." The Lord lead us to rest in Himself, and thus to walk in the enjoyment of His love till we see Him face to face.

Behold, I Come Quickly

For the afflicted ones the Lord has an especial care, and we see Him as the "Great shepherd" caring for the lambs and sheep of His flock.

What is needed among us is not so much new thoughts, though knowledge has its proper place, but what we have learned (and it may be some time ago) brought home in the power of the Holy Spirit to our souls. So as in the address to Philadelphia (Rev. 3), we have the Lord saying to these feeble but faithful ones, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." I believe that we are not so much, in danger of giving up the truth, as losing the power of it in our souls; as for instance, the coming of the Lord, which has long been held as a doctrine, but is losing its power, and is in danger of doing so in our souls.

It has been remarked something to this effect: if the devil can take away the coming of the Lord as a present hope, we lose spiritual power and are on the road which leads to the loss of our crown; but if this is kept bright before us, no man or devil can rob us of our crown. We were reading this morning, "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light [margin, no morning] in them." Isa. 8:20.

Benjamin's Blessing

"And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders." Deut. 33:12.

Deut. 33 gives "the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death." As the eye glances down the beautiful chapter, no brighter blessing appears than that which belongs to Benjamin. Let us dwell upon it briefly, and look upon it as indicating the blessedness which now belongs to him that believes on Jesus. Benjamin's blessing, as that of all Israel, was undoubtedly of an earthly and a temporal character, whereas ours is heavenly and spiritual; yet the one may be interpreted as giving a simple and beautiful indication of the other.

"THE BELOVED OF THE LORD." Benjamin was a son of sorrow, and so named "Benoni" by his mother (see Gen. 35:18). Yet here he is spoken of as the object of Jehovah's love. "Man is born to trouble." But how precious a thing it is to know that we are the "beloved of God" (Rom. 1:7). Every blessing we possess springs from this. Man when awakened to a sense of his need, and desirous of possessing the blessing of God, looks to his own heart, hoping there to find love to God which may prove a basis for the blessing he desires. Alas! he is bitterly disappointed. In his misery he cries-

" `Tis a point I long to know,

Oft it causes anxious thought-

Do I love the Lord or no?

Am I His, or am I not?"

The Scripture replies, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." We rejoice as we learn this, and exultingly say, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." Then follows in its own due order, "We love Him, because He first loved us." (See 1 John 4:7-21.) Let us not then seek to build anything upon our love to Him, but delight in this-that we are the objects of His changeless, eternal love.

Peter boasted much of the love which he had for his Lord. Doubtless it was sincere; but what bitter experience he had to pass through that he might learn not to trust to the strength of his own affection! John delighted to speak of himself as the "disciple, whom Jesus loved." He who wrote of the full display of God's love in the only begotten Son of the Father's bosom did himself recline on the bosom of Jesus. In all our sorrows therefore, in the sense of our own weakness and when assailed with thoughts of our own utter unworthiness, let this be the comfort and joy of our souls-we are "beloved of God."

"SHALL DWELL IN SAFETY." The mention of safety brings to mind the thought of danger; and we ask, To what danger were we exposed? As sinners, we stood exposed to the judgment of God. Every sin merited eternal perdition; and to the lake of fire we must have gone, had not God's love

provided a dwelling place of perfect safety. Such a shelter we were unable to provide for ourselves. All our works, all our endeavors, could not ward off the stroke of justice. What could? Let us go back in the history of Benjamin and Israel for a reply.

Exod. 12 is well known as the chapter which records God's last and sorest plague upon Egypt. It tells of that solemn night when throughout all the land there was not one house where death entered not. God dealt in judgment, maintaining His own character. In the houses of all the Egyptians, the first-born died. For the houses of Israel, the lamb was slain. Death fell upon the unblemished sacrificial victim instead of the first-born. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled at the door, and thus those who would otherwise have fallen beneath Jehovah's stroke had a dwelling place of safety even in the midst of His judgments. "When I see the blood," Jehovah said. He spoke not of their good works or religion or ought beside, but the blood. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Surely none can fail to see in that blood a prefiguring of the "precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God." 1 Pet. 1:19-21. It is that blood which alone can screen from God's judgment. Happy is he who is sheltered by it!

Then are there not foes which trouble and menace? Yes; both evil spirits and wicked men. But God is for us. (Rom. 8:31-39.) The blood which screens us from judgment forms a righteous ground upon which God can manifest Himself as on our part. His love could not triumph at the expense of His righteousness. He could not pass by our sins; but He gave His Son to bear the judgment due to them, and thus declared Himself against our sins, but for us. Who then can be against us? Benjamin, as the other tribes, was sheltered on the night of the Passover, following which God brought him forth from slavery, delivered him from all the harassing foes of the wilderness; and now, as he is about to enter the land, He speaks of a dwelling place of safety. Happy Benjamin! And happy, thrice happy, is he who, through the value of Jesus' blood, has God as his justifier and protector until all danger be past and he is landed in that bright abode of peace!

"BY HIM." The last words were incomplete in beauty; here is their completeness. It is not only a dwelling place of safety which he provides, but it is by Him, at His side. Love must have all distance removed. See how the father ran to meet the wicked son, nor slackened his pace until the weary head of the wanderer was pillowed upon his bosom. Then would he assign to him some place in his house where he might be free from danger? No; if the father acts, he must do so according to the dictates of his own love. What place must the prodigal have? A place near his father.. "Let us eat, and be merry." Oh, blessed picture! What says the sinner? "Oh, if I could but creep in behind heaven's door!" There is no such place. Either, as sinners, we are assigned to the outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, or, as redeemed by the blood of Jesus, we are brought perfectly nigh to God. This is the doctrine of the Scriptures: "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Eph. 2:13. There is the contrast-"far off," "nigh." How near? Just as near as the one blessed word "nigh" can express. It is unqualified nearness.

"AND THE LORD SHALL COVER HIM." In the land of promise Benjamin occupied a small tract of country close beside Jerusalem, and thus they might be covered, as it were, by the shadow of Jehovah's earthly dwelling place. The Lord Himself gave a beautiful figure of the truth which the

words express when, bemoaning Jerusalem, He described the blessing they refused. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings!" They desired not His presence or blessing, and He solemnly declared that the house under the shadow of which Benjamin had dwelt, should be desolate. But how beautiful the figure, and how precious its application to those who submit to be gathered by Him! Enemies may surround, but none can touch the brood without first attacking the parent bird. Oh, believer, why do you tremble when assailed by foes and temptations? He who lives for you must first be assailed and overcome before you can be overthrown. Nor is protection the only idea in the figure. If we are beneath the shadow of His wing, we are where we are kept conscious of the warmth of His heart. Oh, it is a blessed thing that our Lord so knows how to turn everything to account that He makes the very dark times of tribulation and persecution the occasion for more fully manifesting His love! Surely in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us.

"ALL THE DAY LONG." Yes, throughout the weary day of our sorrow here upon earth. The day has many moments, and each moment may bring its changes and fresh sorrows, but throughout its length He covers us. A young Christian woman who had been lying in bed for many years was cheered through months of weariness by the literal rendering of Matt. 28:20, which was given to her by a visitor: "Behold, I am with you all the days." (J.N.D. Trans.) Whether the bright sunlight gleams upon all things and makes them seem lovely, or whether the sky be overcast and storms rage, He is with us all the days.

"AND HE SHALL DWELL -BETWEEN HIS SHOULDERS." According to God's ordinance, the high priest robed in his garments of glory and beauty, bore upon his breast and upon his shoulders the names of the tribes of Israel. There Benjamin shone, as the rest, a precious stone in the light of the sanctuary, held in pure gold. The priesthood failed in man's hand, but it is all fulfilled in Him who is the great Priest over God's house. He bears His people upon His breast and upon His shoulders. That is to say, all His love is engaged for us, and all His divine power is administered in our behalf to bring us through this weary world. Some may say, "It is indeed precious to think of being sheltered in perfect safety, and kept in the assurance of His love; but oh, we are so feeble!" But it does not require much strength to be carried. We asked an aged woman of over eighty years, "How far did the shepherd carry the sheep when he had found it?" She thought for a moment and then a smile kindled in her face as she joyously answered in that sweet monosyllable-"HOME!" It is His divine power which sustains us in each step we take, and what we need is unfeigned dependence upon Him, and unwavering reliance upon His strength. In His bosom and on His shoulders are the two places where He speaks of carrying His own; the one expressive of His realized love, the other of His unfailing strength. (Isa. 40:11; Luke 15:5.)

"The Shepherd's bosom bears each lamb

O'er rock and waste and wild;

The object of that love I am,

And carried like a child."

The Blessed Hope: Great White Throne and Eternal State

The millennium closes the long series of earthly dispensations. God's dealings with the earth, whether in grace, mercy, or judgment, are now concluded; and hence the earth and the heaven disappear before the face of Him who has taken His seat on the great white throne (Rev. 20:11). The final judgment comes between the end of the millennium and the commencement of the eternal state; but before this, an event takes place of great magnitude and importance. It is the destruction of the earth and the heavens by fire. Peter thus speaks of it: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up" And again: "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein" (rather, on account of which) "the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2 Pet. 3:10-12). The day of the Lord, it should be remarked, covers the whole period of the thousand years. It comes as a thief, introduced as it will be by the Lord's appearing; and at its close, the consumption of the earth and heavens by fire takes place. Hence, Peter says, "In the which," because it is included in, though at the end of, the day of the Lord. It is the same event indicated in the Revelation by the words, "From whose face the heaven and the earth fled away," stating the fact only without giving the means of their disappearance; but, as we see from Peter, fire is God's chosen instrumentality for the destruction of this present scene. Then follows the great white throne; the final judgment, therefore, takes place after the passing away of the earth and the heaven. The character of this judgment will demand a closer examination.

First, then, as to the Judge: it is made to appear from the authorized version that God Himself is the Judge: "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God" (Rev. 20:12). It is, however, well known that "throne" should be substituted for "God," and it is very clear from other scriptures that the Lord Jesus is the occupant of, the One that will sit upon, the great white throne. He Himself said, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father" Again: "As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man" (John 5:22-27). With this agree also the words of Paul when he says that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11). The One, therefore, who was once upon this earth, but rejected and crucified, is He who will sit in judgment upon those who refused Him as Saviour and Lord; for the Father wills that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor Himself. In His occupancy, therefore, of this throne of judgment, God publicly vindicates Christ in the presence of men and angels, and holds Him forth as the object of universal honor and homage; so that now every knee that had refused to own Him in the day of grace must at last bow before Him in acknowledgment of His Lordship and supremacy. As seated on the great white throne, He has become the Arbiter of the eternal destinies of all His enemies.

The throne on which He sits is described as "great," and as "white" It is great as suited to the dignity of its occupant; and it is white as a symbol of the character of the judgments that will be

pronounced, every one of which will be according to the holiness of the nature of God.

This judgment is upon persons, not things, and upon unbelievers only. John says, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [hades] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell [hades] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (vss. 12-15). If the exact statements of this Scripture are examined, it will be apparent that there is no trace of any believer in this vast and unnumbered throng. Indeed, as already shown, all believers are caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air at His second coming. There remain therefore, besides those who are left in their graves at His return, only two classes—millennial saints, and millennial unbelievers or rebels. But millennial saints will not die; and hence, since this scene includes only the dead (vs. 12), those who stand before His throne for judgment are composed entirely of the wicked or unbelievers. This conclusion is established in another way. We have two kinds of books opened as the basis of judgment. There are the books of works, and there is the book of life; and it is said that "the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (vs. 12). They are judged, in fact, upon two grounds—positive and negative. Their works are produced in evidence against them; and the absence of their names from the book of life shows that they have no title to mercy or favor; for "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" There is no trace of a single one having his name there, and their works, therefore, become the ground of their sentence; and we know that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified (Rom. 3:20). As another has said, "Another element was brought into view. Sovereign grace alone had saved according to the purpose of God. There was a book of life. Whosoever was not written there was cast into the lake of fire. But it was the finally closing and separating scene for the whole race of men and this world. And though they were judged every man according to his works, yet sovereign grace only had delivered any; and whoever was not found in grace's book was cast into the lake of fire. The sea gave up the dead in it; death and hades the dead in them. And death and hades were put an end to forever by the divine judgment. The heaven and earth passed away, but they were to be revived; but death and hades never. There was for them only divine destruction and judgment. They are looked at as the power of Satan. He has the power of death, and the gates of hades; and hence these are forever destroyed judicially" The last enemy, death, is now destroyed; for Christ "must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet."

Before we pass on to the eternal state, another scripture must be considered. We read in Corinthians, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then [cometh] the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:22-28).

This in many ways, is a most remarkable passage, comprehending as it does all dispensations, or at least covering them in its scope. The immediate subject of the apostle is that of the resurrection. After therefore stating the fact that all die in Adam, and the corresponding truth that all shall be made alive in Christ—that is the “all” connected with Christ, as the “all” in the former case include all connected with Adam—he gives us the order in which the latter shall be accomplished. The resurrection of Christ was the firstfruits of this wondrous harvest, they that are Christ’s, which should be gathered in at His coming. “Then cometh the end” But between this “then” and the foregoing “afterward” the millennium is included, so that “the end” brings us down to its close; and indeed, farther still, down to the close of the judgment of the great white throne. It is this point which needs to be observed; for it is the termination, as such, of the mediatorial kingdom. Hence we find that He delivers up the kingdom to God the Father. All things having been subdued under Him, He yields up the kingdom to Him that put all things under Him, and He Himself takes a subject place, that henceforward God may be all in all. It is the close and the surrender of His earthly kingdom, and thenceforward as the glorified man He is Himself subject. But it must be carefully remembered that His essential Deity forever abides; indeed, the term “God,” used thus absolutely, includes Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is a wondrous revelation; for thereby we learn that throughout eternity He will retain His glorified humanity, moving among the ranks of the redeemed, all of whom are conformed to His image, as the FIRSTBORN among many brethren. If therefore we have, on the one hand, in this scripture, the surrender of the earthly kingdom, we have also, on the other, the introduction to the eternal state, wherein God is all in all.

But it is in the Revelation that we find the fullest description of the eternal state: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea” (Rev. 21:1). Isaiah had spoken of new heavens and a new earth (chap. 65:17), but only in a moral sense as connected with the millennium. Peter takes up his language, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit gives to it a deeper meaning. “Nevertheless,” he says, “we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13). But it is in the Revelation that we see in the vision the actual fulfillment of the promise. We are moreover told that “there was no more sea,” for the time of separation was over and gone, and every part of the new scene was brought into ordered beauty before God; everything would be according to His own mind. Thereon the holy city comes into view. “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 will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” There are several points to be noticed in this wondrous description of the perfection of the eternal state. First, the holy city is seen coming down from God out of heaven. As we have before remarked, during the millennium it is set above the earthly Jerusalem; but now, though John goes back both to its origin and character, it descends lower still, until it rests upon the new earth which has now been formed. The millennial earth could not have received it because, great as was its blessedness, it could not, being still imperfect, have been the home of the eternal tabernacle of God. This is reserved for the new earth wherein righteousness would dwell—have its abiding home. And mark how the city is depicted—“prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” The thousand years have passed, and the city is still robed in her bridal

beauty. Age cannot dim her youth, and hence she is still “a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” The proclamation is now made, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men.” We gather, therefore, that the glorified Church is the dwellingplace of God; and just as in the wilderness encampment the tribes were arranged round about the tabernacle, so here we find men—the saints of other dispensations—grouped about God’s tabernacle in the eternal state. The Lord had said to His people Israel in the wilderness, “I will set My tabernacle among you: and My soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be My people” (Lev. 26:11-12; see also Eze. 37:26-27). And now in the unfoldings of His grace, according to the purposes of His love, His word is accomplished after the perfection of His own thoughts. His tabernacle is now with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God.

Next we have the blessedness of the inhabitants of the scene. But how is it described? In the very way that appeals the most powerfully to hearts that have known the sorrows and tribulations of the wilderness. There will be the absence of everything that had caused us grief or anguish here. First, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes”; not a trace of former sorrow shall remain, and God Himself will remove it. What infinite tenderness in the expression that God Himself shall do this! Even as a mother will tenderly wipe away the tears of her child, so God Himself will delight to wipe away all tears from the eyes of His saints. And once wiped away they can never return; for “there shall be no more death” (how many tears has death wrung from bereaved ones in this scene!), “neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain” All these, the former things, will have forever passed away—these dark clouds—before the perpetual sunlight and joy of the eternal presence of God.

“And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things” (rather, these things); “and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:5-8). Thus all is made new; the new creation has reached its consummation. Everything within and without is very good; perfect, as measured by the holiness of God. It is therefore, a scene in which He can dwell with complacency and delight. All has flowed from Himself, and all redounds to His glory; for He is both Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

The scene is then closed by the announcement of grace, promise and judgment. Every one that is athirst may receive of the fountain of the water of life freely. The overcomer shall inherit all these things. To borrow another’s language, “The world for the Christian is now a great Rephidim. This is the twofold portion of his final blessedness: he shall have God for His God, and be His son. Those who feared this path—did not overcome the world and Satan, but have walked in iniquity—would have their part in the lake of fire. This closes the history of God’s ways” It will be remarked that there is no mention of the Lamb. The reason is, as has been pointed out, that the Son also Himself is now subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

“FOR OF HIM, AND THROUGH HIM, AND TO HIM, ARE ALL THINGS: TO WHOM BE GLORY
Forever. AMEN”

The Blessed Hope: Is It a Present or Deferred Hope?

The question now arises, whether the coming of the Lord is an immediate hope, or whether we are to look for the occurrence of preceding events. This is a vital point; and hence it is necessary to be very careful in the consideration of the teaching of Scripture upon the subject.

Speaking generally, then, it may be said that there are three words found in connection with the Second Advent. The first is *παρουσια*—which means simply “coming,” and hence is applied to the personal coming of any one, as well as to that of Christ. (See 1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 7:6; 2 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 1:26; Phil. 2:12; as examples of its use in the coming of persons). It is used some sixteen times in relation to the coming of Christ (Matt. 24:3,37,39; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1,8-9; Jas. 5:7, 1 Pet. 1:16; 3:4). The use of the word—from its very significance—is general; and does not, therefore, of itself indicate the precise character of the event with which it may be associated. It is found alike, as will be seen from the above passages, in Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4. Another word is *■ποκ■λωφισ*, and signifies “revelation,” and this is used four times (1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, 13; and we might add, perhaps, 1 Pet. 4:13). This word is fixed in its application—always referring to the revelation of our Lord from heaven, that is, to His coming with His saints, and in judgment to the earth—as, for example, in 2 Thessalonians 1:7. The last word is *■πιφανε■α* and means “appearing” or “manifestation,” and is rendered in the English Bible “appearing” This word is used once of the first coming of our Lord (2 Tim. 1:10); and five times (if we include 2 Thessalonians 2:8, where it is used in conjunction with *παρουσ■α* of His future appearing. In addition to this, it may be added that when the Lord announces His own coming (as, for example, in Rev. 22:7, 12, 20), He employs the common word *■ρχομαι*—“I come.”

Now the difficulty is this. If we have to wait for the appearing or the revelation of Christ, it is very evident that we cannot entertain any immediate expectation of the Lord. For we learn from Scripture that many events are to precede that time. Thus, to take 2 Thessalonians 2, the man of sin—in other words, the antichrist, is first to appear upon the scene; and this, as we are also taught, necessitates the previous restoration of the Jews to their own land, the rebuilding of their temple, and the reestablishment of their sacrificial services (Matt. 24:15; Dan. 9:26-27; Rev. 11-13). Moreover the great tribulation, with all its sorrows, must, in that case, be passed through before the coming of the Lord.

Is this, then, the teaching of Scripture? In the first place, it cannot be denied that believers are spoken of as waiting for the appearing or revelation, as well as the coming of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:7 the apostle says, “Ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming (*■ποκ■λυφιν*) of our Lord Jesus Christ” Again, writing to Timothy, he says, “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing (*■πιφανε■α*) of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6:14). Once more, in his epistle to Titus, he says, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing (*■πιφανε■α*) of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Will believers, then—believers of this dispensation, that is the Church—remain upon the earth until the appearing

of Christ? A close examination of Scripture shows that there are two distinct events defined: the coming of the Lord Jesus for His saints, and the coming of Christ with His saints. In 1 Thessalonians 3:13, as well as in many other passages, we find the latter; and in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 the former; and Paul teaches us most distinctly in Colossians that the coming of Christ with His saints will take place at His appearing. He says, "When Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). If this be so, the saints must have been caught up to be with Christ before His return to the earth in public manifestation.

Leaving for the moment the difficulty already stated, but only to be able to solve it the more completely, we may inquire, Is there anything to happen between now, as far as the Scriptures teach, and the return of the Lord? May the Christian, in other words, momentarily expect, be constantly waiting for, Christ? The teaching of our blessed Lord has been alluded to; but we may once more recall the fact that, both in the parable of the virgins, and in that of the talents, no other conclusion could have been drawn from His words; for the virgins who fall asleep are the same who are awakened by the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom," and the servants who receive the talents are the same who are reckoned with on His return. Collect, indeed, all the Scriptures in which He speaks of His coming, and it cannot be doubted for a moment that He intended to infer the possibility of His coming back at any, even the most unexpected, moment. (See Mark 13:34-37; Luke 12:35-37; John 21:20-21.)

The Apostle Paul uses language of like import. In writing to the Corinthians concerning the resurrection of the bodies of believers, he is careful—led of the Spirit of God—to say, "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51); and in the epistle to the Thessalonians he says, "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:15). It is clear, therefore, by the use of the word "we," that he included himself as among the possible number who might be found alive on the Lord's return; and hence that, as far as he knew, there was nothing to hinder the Lord's coming for His saints during his own lifetime. That Peter thought it not improbable is likewise seen from the fact that he received a special revelation to inform him that he would have to die (2 Pet. 1:15). And surely the fact that the last announcement of the inspired record is, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20), would foster and strengthen the same conclusion.

But notwithstanding all this evidence, everything depends upon the question whether Christians (the Church) will remain on the earth until the Lord's appearing. If then we turn to Matthew 24, and contrast it with a scripture in Colossians, we shall find this question distinctly and plainly answered. In Matthew 24 we read, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:29-30). Here we have the order of events at the appearing of the Son of man; and the reader will mark that (1) there is the tribulation, (2) the disturbance of the heavenly luminaries, (3) the sign of the Son of man in heaven, (4) the mourning of the tribes of the earth, (5) their seeing the Son of man coming, while as yet the elect are upon the earth still ungathered. But what have we read in Colossians? That "when Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear

with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4). So also in the Revelation, we find that when Christ comes out of heaven for judgment (His appearing), “the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and white” (Rev. 19:11-14). Who are these? Their dress is characteristic, and supplies the answer; for in the eighth verse we read, “the fine linen is the righteousness” (righteousness— ζικαι■ματ■) “of saints.”

Evidently, therefore, “the elect” in Matthew 24 cannot be the Church, since the saints who compose the Church appear with Christ; and in fact, as the chapter itself abundantly shows, they are the elect of Israel, the Jewish remnant whom God by His Spirit has prepared for the time when the Lord, whom they seek, shall come suddenly to His temple (Mal. 3:1). It thus follows that the Lord Jesus will return for His people prior to His appearing; and, inasmuch as He destroys antichrist with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8), it must also be prior to his rise and sway, and hence also before the great tribulation, since (as will be seen later) this is connected with the time of the antichrist.

But thereon follows a further thing. All the predicted events which are looked for before the Lord’s appearing are connected with the restoration of God’s ancient people, and the actings of the man of sin, the son of perdition (the antichrist); and consequently, as far as the Scriptures reveal, there is nothing whatever between the present moment and the possibility of the Lord’s return for His own.

How, then, is the fact to be explained that we are said in Scripture to wait for the appearing, as well as for the coming, seeing that when Christ appears we appear with Him? Whenever the question of responsibility is brought in, the appearing, and not the coming, is the goal; and this is because that, since the earth has been the scene of the responsibility, the earth also will be the scene of the displayed recompense. This in no way interferes with the fact that the coming of Christ for His saints at any moment is the proper hope of the believer. On the other hand, it throws additional light on the ways of God in the government of His people, brings out a new feature of the perfection of the Lord’s dealings with His servants. When departing, He entrusted to them gifts for His service, saying, “Occupy till I come” (Luke 19:13). The responsibility of the servants in the use of that which has been committed to their charge is confined to, limited by, their sojourn upon the earth. Hence it is when the Lord returns to the earth that the result of their responsibility is declared. But it is not only in the use of gifts that this principle is seen; it is found in every sort of responsibility of the saint. The Corinthians came behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Thessalonians are directed to look forward for the blessed issue of their persecutions to the time when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (2 Thess. 1:7); and Timothy was to keep the commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6:14). For it is then that He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed (2 Thess. 1:10); and then, therefore, that there will be the public manifestation of the result and issue of the pathway of the saint through this world. This is the consummation and the fruition of the service of the believer, as well as the time when the rights of the Lord Jesus Himself shall be declared and vindicated, and consequently, in this aspect, we are said to love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).

But, as we have shown from the Scriptures, the Lord returns for His saints before His appearing; and it is to His coming, therefore, for them that their eye is directed. This is the proper object of our

hope. Our hearts occupied with Himself, we wait longingly for the moment when, according to His word, He will come to receive us to Himself, that where He is we may be also (John 14:3). Such, then, is our attitude. As Israel on the Passover night, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, waited for the signal to depart, so we should ever be found, with our loins girt and our lamps burning, expecting the Lord to descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, to fetch us out of this scene, to be forever with Himself. Are we constantly maintaining this attitude? Do we begin the day with the thought that, before the darkness returns, we may be caught up into the unclouded light of His presence? When we lie down at night, do we remember that before the morning dawns we may be caught away from our beds? Are all our matters kept so constantly arranged that we should desire to alter nothing, if the next moment we should be with the Lord? Are all our purposes, all our occupations, undertaken and carried on with this wondrous prospect before our eyes? Surely nothing short of this should satisfy those who are living in the expectation of the Lord. May He Himself lead us into all the power of this blessed truth, using it to separate us increasingly from everything not suitable to Himself; and, by the presentation of Himself to us in all His beauty as the Bright and Morning Star, may He occupy and absorb our hearts!

'A little while'—come, Saviour, come!

For Thee Thy Bride has tarried long;

Take Thy poor waiting pilgrims home,

To sing the new eternal song,

To see Thy glory, and to be

In everything conformed to Thee!"

The Blessed Hope: Judgment Seat of Christ

“We all,” says the apostle, “must appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10). He includes in this statement, undoubtedly, both believers and unbelievers, though, as will be seen later, there is a long intervening period between the judgment of the two classes; for there is not the least foundation in the word of God for the common idea that saints and sinners will appear at the same time before the judgment-seat. But it is with believers that we are now concerned, and their appearance before the tribunal of Christ will take place between His coming and His appearing. Caught up, as we saw in our last paper, to meet the Lord in the air, they are then like Christ, will see Him as He is (1 John 3:2), and will be with Him forever (1 Thess. 4:17). The place to which they are translated, and in which they will be with the Lord, is the Father’s house. This we know from the Lord’s own words, “In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2, 3). There the blessed Lord will conduct all His own, and, if we may adapt the words, will present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24); and with what overflowing joy will He and the children God has given Him appear before His Father and their Father, and His God and their God! And with what joy will God Himself behold the fruit and perfection of His own counsels, the redeemed all conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren! (Rom. 8:29).

The saints, then, will dwell in the Father’s house during the interval that will elapse between the coming of Christ for, and His return with, His saints; and, as before remarked, it is during this time that they will be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. The proof of this is found in Revelation 19. Just on the eve of returning with Christ (vss. 11-14), John tells us, “I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for, the fine linen is the righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) of saints” (vss. 6-8). Here then we find the saints robed in their (not God’s) righteousness, the fruit of their practical ways, produced and wrought out surely by the Holy Spirit, but nevertheless counted as theirs in the wonderful grace of God; and hence, since the judgment seat of Christ for believers is concerning the things done in their body, this can only be the results of declared judgment. The arraying the Lamb’s wife in the fine linen, clean and white, will therefore follow upon the manifestation of the saints before Christ’s tribunal; and both take place, as it would seem from this chapter, preparatory to, and immediately before, the appearing of the Lord with His saints. Had we not this instruction, we might have thought that the judgment seat at least would have followed close upon the rapture. But there is grace in its postponement. The saints are caught up, and are with the Lord in the Father’s house, and they are permitted to become familiar with, and, if we may use the word, at home in, the glory into which they have been introduced, before the question of the deeds done in the body is brought up for settlement.

The character of the judgment must be distinctly observed, and one or two preliminary remarks will greatly conduce both to prevent mistake and to the understanding of the subject.

The believer will never be judged for sins. It is in the passage before us not sins, but deeds done in the body; and indeed to suppose that the question of our guilt, our sins, could be again raised is to overlook, not to say falsify, the character of grace and the work of redemption. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment (κρισιν); but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). Again we are told, “By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). The question of sin was settled, and closed forever, at the cross; and every believer is before God in all the abiding efficacy of the sacrifice there offered, yea, accepted in the Beloved. Even now, therefore, we are without spot before God, and our sins and iniquities will be remembered no more (Heb. 10:17).

This will be at once seen when it is remembered that we shall have our glorified bodies—be like Christ—before we are manifested before His judgment-seat; for, as already pointed out, the resurrection of the saints who have fallen asleep in Christ, and the change of the living, and the rapture of both into the presence of the Lord, will precede our appearing at the judgment seat. This is unspeakable consolation; for being already like Christ, we shall have full fellowship with Him in every judgment He passes upon our works; and we shall therefore rejoice at the exposure and rejection of all that flowed, in our lives down here, from the flesh, and not from the Holy Spirit. This answers the question sometimes put, Whether we shall not tremble and be ashamed as all the deeds of our Christian life are brought up and shown out in their real character? Indeed, as another has said, “We are in the light by faith when the conscience is in the presence of God. We shall be according to the perfection of that light when we appear before the tribunal of Christ. I have said that it is a solemn thing, and so it is; for everything is judged according to that light; but it is that which the heart loves, because, thanks to our God, we are light in Christ!

“But there is more than this. When the Christian is thus manifested, he is already glorified, and, perfectly like Christ, has no remains of the evil nature in which he sinned; and he can now look back at all the way God has led him in grace—helped, lifted up, kept from falling, not withdrawn His eyes from the righteous. He knows as he is known. What a tale of grace and mercy! If I look back now, my sins do not rest on my conscience, though I have a horror of them; they are put away behind God’s back. I am the righteousness of God in Christ; but what a sense of love and patience, and goodness and grace! How much more perfect then, when all is before me! Surely there is great gain as to light and love in giving an account of ourselves to God, and not a trace remains of the evil in us. We are like Christ. If a person fears to have all out thus before God, I do not believe he is free in soul as to righteousness, being the righteousness of God in Christ, not fully in the light. And we have not to be judged for anything; Christ has put it all away”

Bearing these things in mind, we may consider more closely the nature of the judgment itself. It is not we ourselves who have to be judged, nor, as has been abundantly explained, will our sins reappear against us, but, as the Scripture itself says, “we must all appear” (be manifested) “before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad.” The body of the believer is the Lord’s, a member of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:15-19), and is therefore to be used in His service

for the display of Christ Himself (Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 4:10). Hence the apostle's earnest expectation and hope was that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death (Phil. 1:20). It is on this account that we are responsible for the deeds done in our body, so that while we are perfected forever through the one offering of Christ, and there cannot be, therefore, any further imputation of sin to us, every act of our lives, not only as service, but every deed which we have done, will be manifested, tested, and judged when before the judgment seat of Christ. The good will be seen, and declared to be such; and while these were surely produced, wrought out in, and by us, through the grace of God, and the power of His Spirit, they will be reckoned, in His infinite compassion, as ours, and as such we shall receive the recompense. The bad, however fair they appeared here, will also be seen and recognized in their true character, and belonging to none but ourselves, the product of the flesh, will receive their just condemnation, we ourselves rejoicing to behold everything that had dishonored our blessed Lord, though done by ourselves, receiving its righteous meed and doom. The time for concealments will then be gone; for that which maketh everything manifest is light, and then everything will be searched and tested by the full blaze of the light of the holiness of that judgment seat.

It is a question worthy of consideration whether this truth occupies its due place in our souls. Knowing grace and the fullness of redemption, there is a danger of overlooking or forgetting our responsibility. But this should never be the case; and the prospect of the judgment seat of Christ, while it has not a shade of apprehension for the believer, is yet intended to exert a most practical influence on our souls. The very connection in which it is found shows this to be the case. "We are confident," says the apostle, "and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him [rather, acceptable to Him εὐαρεστοὶ αὐτῷ]. For we must all appear" 2 Cor. 5:8-10). The prospect, therefore, braced up the soul of the apostle, stimulating him with unwearied zeal in all that he did to seek only the approbation of Christ. In fact, this is precisely what it does for us, enabling us to bring all our actions into the light of His presence now, and helping us to do them for and unto Himself. Herein indeed lies our strength. Satan is very subtle, and often tempts us to be men-pleasers; but when we remember that all will be manifested before the judgment seat, we are impervious to his snares, knowing that if we commend ourselves to others, it may be at the cost of displeasing Christ. And what the profit of practicing deception, whether upon ourselves or upon others, when the nature of all that we do is so soon to be exposed? To be acceptable to Christ will be our aim just in proportion as we have His tribunal before our souls.

It will likewise help us to be patient under misconception, and in the presence of wrongdoing or evil. During the days of the Reformation in Italy, a monk, who had received the truth of the gospel, was subjected to close confinement under the custody of a brother monk. Through a long period of years he bore without a murmur the harsh and rigorous treatment of his jailor. Finally, he was ordered forth to be executed. As he left the cell which had been his prison-house, he turned to his custodian, and meekly said, "Brother, we shall soon know which of us has been pleasing to the Lord" We also, in like manner, can calmly leave every disputed question, whether concerning ourselves or our brethren, to be settled before the judgment-seat of Christ. We shall thus be able to adopt the language of the apostle, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment (man's day): yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing of myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing

before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:3-5). The influence of this truth, if held in the power of the Holy Spirit, would be incalculable. It would produce in us exercised consciences even in respect of our smallest actions, as it would keep the holiness of the Lord, whom we serve, continually before our souls; and at the same time it would save us from being occupied with the failures of our brethren, as we should be constantly reminded of the words of the apostle, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth" (Rom. 14:4).

The Lord give us to live more continually under the power of this truth, that all our words and acts may be spoken and done in the light of that day.

The Blessed Hope: Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Another event takes place in heaven, after the judgment-seat of Christ, before His return with His saints; namely, the marriage supper of the Lamb. The scripture that refers to it may again be cited: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And He saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:7-9). In this heavenly scene we behold the consummation of redemption, in respect of the church, in her presentation to, and everlasting union with, the Object of all her hopes and affections.

A few preliminary words, however, may be necessary for the apprehension of the true character of this scene. From many passages of Scripture we gather that the church is not only the body (Eph. 1:23, 5:30; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 12:27), but also the bride of Christ. Paul thus tells the Corinthians, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). Again, when expounding the duties of husbands to their wives, he enforces them on the distinct ground of marriage being a type of the union of Christ with the church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27). Once more: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they too shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (vss. 31-32). Here the Spirit of God carries us back to the formation of Eve out of Adam, and her presentation to and union with him as his wife, as a type of the presentation of the church to Christ, the last Adam. As long as He was down here as a man, He abode alone; but a deep sleep, even the sleep of death, fell also upon Him, according to the purpose of God; and as the fruit of His work, through the descent of the Holy Spirit, the church was formed -formed and united to Him; so that, as Adam said of Eve, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23), we (believers) can say, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30).

But another thing is brought before us in the Ephesians. It is said that Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it. His love, therefore, was the source of all-His motive, in this aspect, for the gift of Himself. Finding the one pearl of great price, valuing it according to the estimate of His own affections, He went and sold all that He had, and bought it (Matt. 13:46); He gave Himself (and giving Himself, He gave "all that love could give") for it. And He gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; thus making the church morally suitable to Himself, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious church," etc. We have thus three steps-past, present, and future. He gave Himself for it in His death upon the cross; He cleanses it (the process He is carrying on now through His intercession at the right hand of God, in answer to which there is the washing of water by the word; and He presents it to Himself—which takes place at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And all, every step, be it remarked, is the fruit of His love. If He still waits at the right hand of God, it is only that every one who is to be a part of His bride shall be brought in. “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me” (John 6:37); and He has purchased, redeemed, all by the gift of Himself. He will, therefore, keep His seat until the last of these is brought out of darkness into God’s marvelous light. Then He will delay no longer; for the same love that moved Him to give Himself will impel Him to fetch His bride. Hence He presents Himself to the church, saying, “Behold, I come quickly,” reminding her that His love never wearies, that He is eagerly waiting for the moment when He can come to receive her unto Himself. Having fetched His own, in the manner described previously, and brought them into the Father’s house, and having manifested all before His judgment-seat, the time for the marriage has come, and it is this event which is celebrated in the passage cited from the Revelation.

It is the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7); and, as another has said, “‘the Lamb’ is a figure or description of the Son of God, which tells us of the sorrows He endured for us. The soul understands this, and therefore this title, ‘the Lamb’s wife,’ tells that it is by His sufferings the Lord has made her His own; that He so valued her as to give up all for her.” Even now believers are united to Christ; but the marriage speaks of another thing. It is the time when all the believers of this dispensation—embracing all from Pentecost until the Lord’s return—already glorified, and looked at corporately, are fully and finally associated with the risen and glorified Man, with the One who, in His own matchless grace and peerless love, has chosen the church to be His companion forever. He is, in the scene before us, on the eve of His appearing; but before He returns to the place of His rejection He will formally take into union with Himself her who has shared in measure His sorrows and sufferings, that He may display her to the world as sharing in the same glory with Himself. “And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me” (John 17:22-23). This refers to the time when He returns to take His power and reign, “And earth His royal bride shall see Beside Him on the throne.”

The marriage is preparatory to this public display, and is the expression of His own heart in thus bringing the church into participation with Himself of His own glory and His own joy.

Combining the Scripture in Ephesians with that before us, it may be seen that the wife will be robed in a twofold beauty. Here we are told that “His wife hath made herself ready, and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white” There it is said that He will “present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). This last beauty is the result of what Christ has done for her. “He gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word” Thereby, as already seen, He has made her morally a suitable companion to Himself; and as He has now brought her before Himself, she shines resplendent with His own beauty, reflecting His own glory. It is His own likeness He sees before Him, reproduced in His wife; and He has thus made her the meet companion of His exaltation and glory.

But the fine linen indicates another kind of beauty. It is the righteousness of saints (vs. 8) — the result, as before pointed out, of the manifestation before the judgment-seat, of Christ. This fact wonderfully enhances our conceptions of the grace of our God. If we do a single thing which meets

His approval, it can only be through the power which He Himself has given us; “for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”(Eph. 2:10). And yet He will adorn us with all the fruit and beauty of that which has been wrought out in and by us through His own grace and power. Every kind of beauty therefore—both divine and human—will characterize the Lamb’s wife, according to the perfection of God’s thoughts and counsels, and according also to the mind and heart of the Lamb.

Several distinct things mark the celebration of the marriage. First, there is the outburst of joy and praise, as “the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (vs. 6). The marriage, indeed, as the chapter shows, is immediately before the coming forth in judgment of the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, and hence is on the eve of the world—sovereignty of “our Lord and His Christ” (Rev. 11:15). Then they cry, “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lord is come” (vs. 7). The nuptials of the Lamb, therefore, excite the wondering adoration of heaven, of all the servants of God, and of them that fear Him, both small and great (vs. 5). Last of all, John is commanded to write, “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” The portion of the wife is as unique as it is incomparable; but even those who are invited to have fellowship with the joy of that day are pronounced blessed. And no wonder; for they are admitted to view the consummation of the desires of Christ, His joy in presenting to Himself her for whom He had died, and who, made meet for her association with Himself, was now robed in the glory of God (John 17:22; Rev. 21:10-11). It is, therefore, a day of unbroken joy—joy to the heart of God, joy to the Lamb and His wife, and joy to all who are permitted to behold this wondrous scene. But it is the Lamb Himself who attracts our gaze as the prominent figure of that day; and it is called, as one has said, “the marriage of the Lamb, not the marriage of the Church or of the Lamb’s wife, but of the Lamb, as though the Lamb was the one chiefly interested in that joy. 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 over His ransomed bride. In all things He is to have the preeminence; and as in all things, so in this—that His joy in her will be greater than hers in Him.”

“For Thee, His royal bride—for thee,

His brightest glories shine;

And, happier still, His changeless heart,

With all its love, is thine”

The Blessed Hope: Rapture of the Saints

When the Lord returns for His people, two things will take place—the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and the change of living believers; and then both alike will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. This is distinctly taught in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Our blessed Lord Himself foreshadowed this truth, indeed stated it, though His meaning could scarcely be apprehended without the further light of the epistles. On His way to Bethany, after the death of Lazarus, He said to Martha, “Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that He shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die” (John 11:23-26). Here then we have the same two classes—those who believed in Christ, but who died before His return, these should live; and secondly, those who should be then alive, and believed in Him, these should never die—corresponding exactly with the two classes found in 1 Thessalonians 4.

In order, however, to make the subject clear and simple, it must first be shown that only believers will be raised from the dead at the second coming of our Lord. There is no doctrine more plainly taught in the Scripture, or so completely overlooked or ignored by the mass of professing Christians. The common thought is, that at the end of the world, at the close of the millennium, there will be a resurrection alike of believers and unbelievers; that all together will be arraigned before the judgment-seat, and that then the eternal destiny of each will be declared. But this theological conception, albeit so widely taught and accepted, not only has no foundation in, but is also directly opposed to, the teaching of the word of God. This will be confessed if attention is given to the proofs about to be shown, that none but believers will be raised at the Lord’s coming.

First of all, a few Scriptures may be cited from the gospels, in addition to that from John 11. On coming down from the mount of transfiguration, the Lord charged His disciples that they should not tell what they had seen, “till the Son of man were risen from among the dead” (■κ νεκρ■ν). “And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from among the dead should mean” (Mark 9:9,10). They believed, as Martha did, that there would be a resurrection at the last day (John 11:24); but hitherto they had never heard of a resurrection from among the dead, and this it was that caused their astonishment. Here, of course, it was the resurrection of Christ Himself that was in question; but inasmuch as He was the firstfruits of His own, His resurrection was both the pledge and type of theirs. In Luke 14:14 we find the expression, “the resurrection of the just,” and in another chapter (20:35) the Lord speaks of those “who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from among the dead” (κα■ τ■ς ■ναστ■σεως τ■ς ■κ νεκρ■ν). The phrase which the Lord uses is unmistakable in its signification that it is a partial resurrection, that those who obtain this resurrection will leave others behind them in their graves. The teaching of John 5:28-29 supports the same conclusion. Going back to the 25th verse, it will be noted that the term “hour” includes a whole dispensation. “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live” That hour has lasted from that moment until the present time, in accordance with

the preceding verse, "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" and it will last until the Lord's return. It marks the whole day of grace. In like manner the term "hour" in the 28th verse includes a whole dispensation. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation"—judgment (κρ■σεως). Two resurrections are thus clearly distinguished: that of life, which will take place, as we shall see, at the coming of the Lord; and that of judgment, which will take place after the close of the millennium (Rev. 20:11-15).

If we turn now to the epistles, we shall find even more exact statements. The subject of 1 Corinthians 15 is the resurrection of the body; and yet not the resurrection of the bodies of all, but only that of believers. This may be seen at a glance. After then showing the consequences of the false doctrine—that there was no resurrection—the apostle states the truth: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. 15:20-23). Language could not be more exact or explicit. So also in the scripture already cited (1 Thess. 4) it is said, "The dead in Christ shall rise first" (no others are within the apostle's view): "then we which are alive and remain." There is not a thought of unbelievers being included. It is this fact which explains this same apostle's expression in another epistle: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (rather, from among the dead) (Phil. 3:11).

One more scripture may be permitted. In Revelation 20 we read of some who "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" The application of this scripture will be examined, if the Lord will, later on; but attention now is called to the following statement: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection" (vss. 4-5). It is remembered that interpreters have sought to prove that this is a spiritual resurrection (whatever that may mean); but if so, then the resurrection at the close of the chapter is not a literal one, and hence they would prove, like the false teachers at Corinth, that there is no resurrection of the dead! No; language so clear and unmistakable, especially when taken in connection with the other scriptures used, places beyond all doubt that God in His grace has purposed that believers should rise from among the dead at the coming of the Lord; and this is called the first resurrection. Hence it is that the term firstfruits is applied to the resurrection of our blessed Lord (1 Cor. 15:20), being the firstfruits of the harvest of His own to be gathered in at His coming (See Lev. 23:10-11).

There is one scripture, however, which may seem, in the minds of those who have not examined the subject, to contradict the above statements. This is the well-known passage in Matthew 25, in which we find the sheep and the goats gathered before Christ at the same time. This scene, popularly conceived to be a description of the final judgment, is often referred to in opposition to the truth of the first resurrection of believers. But the slightest examination of the words used by our blessed Lord will show that He does not allude to the subject of the resurrection: "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations" (vss. 31-32). The reference is, therefore, to His appearing and kingdom, and to His judgment of the living, and not of the dead.

We do not speak of “the nations” in respect of the dead: this term describes the living. And observe, too, that there are three classes—the sheep, the goats, and the brethren of the King; and this fact itself fixes the interpretation of the whole scene, showing conclusively that it is the judgment of the living nations consequent upon the appearing of the Son of man in His glory, and His assumption of His throne. The “brethren,” therefore, are Jews, who had been sent out as the King’s messengers with the annunciation of His kingdom; and those who received them and their message are the sheep, and those who rejected them are the goats. Their relationship to the King is made dependent upon their treatment of His messengers. (See for this principle Matthew 10:40-42.)

Having then established that when the Lord returns it is to fetch His own, whether they have previously died, or are living still upon the earth, according to His word—“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself” (John 14:3)—we may now consider the manner of His coming, as well as the rapture of the saints. The most precise instruction is given to us upon the subject in a scripture already referred to, but which may now be quoted at large. “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent” (go before, or anticipate) “them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:13-17). The bearing of this important passage is sometimes overlooked from inattention to its exact statements. The Thessalonian saints did not doubt concerning their portion in Christ on His return; but, somehow or other, they had fallen into the error of supposing that those who had fallen asleep before that event would suffer loss. It is to correct this mistake that the apostle gives some special instruction “by the word of the Lord,” that is by a revelation upon this particular subject. He shows, then, that all who sleep in (or through,) Jesus, God will bring back with Him, that this indeed is connected with our faith in, and is a consequence of, the death and resurrection of Christ. Thereon he explains how this is possible, and this explanation it is which formed the subject of the special revelation to which we have alluded. The Lord will come, and then the dead in Christ will be raised, the living changed, and thus will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.

This may take place, as we saw in the last paper, at any moment. Let us therefore familiarize our minds with the scene. Suddenly, then, the Lord Himself will descend from heaven in the manner here described. First, with a shout. This has occasioned a difficulty in many minds. If, they have thought, the Lord returns only for His people, and He descends with a shout, must it not then be in a public manner? By no means necessarily. The word itself is one of relationship, indicating, for example, the order of a commander to his soldiers; and thus it is a shout intended only for those to whom it is addressed, and the import of which would not be understood by others. When our blessed Lord was upon the earth, a voice came to Him from heaven, and some of the bystanders thought that it thundered, while others said “an angel spake to Him” (John 12:28-29). So also at the conversion of Saul, his companions heard a voice, that is the sound of a voice (Acts 9:7); “but

they did not hear the voice of Him that spake to me,” that is the significance of the voice (Acts 22:9; compare Daniel 10:7). So will it be when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven. All His own will hear and understand the import of the shout; but if heard by others it will only seem as the roll of distant thunder, or, taken in combination with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, should these be likewise heard, as a strange phenomenon, to be discussed and explained by scientific men. It is probable that the three—the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God (see Numbers 10)—have but one object, the summoning, the assembling together, of the dead and living saints for their translation into the presence of their Lord.

Two effects follow, and follow instantaneously; for the apostle says in another epistle, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1 Cor. 15:51-52). “The dead in Christ shall rise first” What a stupendous scene! All that are Christ’s, including, therefore, saints of the past, as well as of the present dispensation, shall rise at His coming (1 Cor. 15:23). Tracing down the line of the ages from Adam till the last saint to be gathered in, all this countless multitude will, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” spring up from their graves—raised incorruptible. And not only so, but all the saints then living will be changed, so that all alike will be clothed upon with their resurrection bodies, in fashion like unto Christ’s body of glory (Phil. 3:21). It is, then, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, that the saying that is written will be brought to pass, “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54; see also 2 Cor. 5:1-4). But no sooner has this marvelous change been wrought, than all its subjects will be caught up “in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” Then the Lord Himself enters for the first time, as far as His people are concerned, upon the full fruit of His redemption-work, of the travail of His soul. And what tongue could tell, or pen describe, His joy when He thus redeems from the grave the very bodies of His people, and when He brings by the word of His power all His chosen ones into His presence, and all conformed to His own image! Nor is it possible to express even our own joy, the joy on which we then shall enter, when the longing desires of our hearts are all realized, and, like Him, we shall behold His face, see Him as He is, and be with Him forever.

“Knowing as I am known!”

How shall I love that word,

How oft repeat before the throne,

“Forever with the Lord!”

It is for this we wait, and the time is not far distant when all will be accomplished; for we rest on the sure word of our faithful Lord, who has said, “Surely I come quickly”

The Blessed Hope: Restoration of the Jews

There is nothing more certain from the word of God than that the Jews, who are now dispersed throughout the world, will be restored to their own land; for “He that scattered Israel will gather him” (Jer. 31:10). The time of their restoration is not revealed; but inasmuch as they are found in the land soon after the rapture of the saints, it is evident that it will take place about that time, whether before or after it would be impossible to say, but probably afterward, because otherwise there would be a visible sign of the Lord’s being at hand.

A brief reference to God’s ways in government on the earth will very much simplify and facilitate our understanding of this subject. We learn from the prophet Daniel that, on the utter failure of Israel as the depository of God’s power in the earth, the dominion was transferred to the Gentiles. Thus, in the interpretation of the great image which Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream, Daniel says: “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven, hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold” (Dan. 2:37-38). Three empires would follow—the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman; and the last of these, disappearing for a time, would finally revive, but be divided into ten kingdoms, as symbolized by the ten toes of the image, all of which however would be united in a common federation under one supreme head (Dan. 2:31-43; 7; Rev. 13 and 17). These empires reach down to the end, but the last is superseded, and indeed destroyed, by the kingdom of Christ; for “in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2:44; see also Rev. 19:11-21, and 20). Now the period which embraces the whole of these monarchies is termed “the times of the Gentiles,” during which, according to the words of our Lord, Jerusalem is to be “trodden down of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24). The absence of the Jews, therefore, from their own land will coincide, or nearly so, with this period. But God’s purposes concerning His ancient people will yet be accomplished, “for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom. 11:29). And hence, together with the completion and rapture of the church, God will commence to deal again with that nation.

It is true that a small remnant, mainly composed of the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin (Ezra 10:7-9), was permitted to return to Jerusalem during the reign of Cyrus, the account of which we have in Ezra and Nehemiah; but this was in no way a national restoration, nor the full accomplishment of God’s purposes, for Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi all prophesied after this period, and speak of the time of the national blessing as yet future (Hag. 2:7-9; Zech. 9-14; Mal. 3 and 4). Indeed from the time of this return until the birth of our Lord, so far from being an independent nation, they were always in subjection to the Gentile power. In such a condition there was nothing to answer to the glowing prediction of the prophet: “And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in My wrath I smote thee, but in My favor have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be

shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those kingdoms shall be utterly wasted" (Isa. 60:10-12). The object indeed of this partial return would seem to have been that Christ might be born among them, according to the predictions of the prophets, and be presented to them as the Messiah. This took place; and the gospel of Matthew, which especially deals with this subject, gives us in full the results. He was utterly rejected. They chose Barabbas that they might compass the destruction of Christ. "The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cry out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified" (Matt. 27:21-23). In the gospel of John their iniquity is, if possible, still more strikingly displayed. "Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). They thus deliberately renounced the hope and glory of their nation, rejected their Messiah in their wicked desire to secure the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth; and from that day to this they have been suffering the consequences of their fearful crime, as outcasts and a bye-word, among the nations of the earth.

But God, whatever the sin of His people, can not deny Himself; and in the death of Him whom His ancient people rejected (for He died for that nation—John 11:52), He laid the foundation for their future restoration and blessing. The evidence of this is so abundant that it is difficult to know where to begin or end; but a few scriptures may be selected, leaving our readers to trace out the details at their own leisure. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts... of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:11-12, et seq). Again we read, that "the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors" (Isa. 14:1, 2. Read also Isa. 25:6-12; 26; 27:6; 30:18-26; 35:10; 49:7-26,54,60-61).The language of Jeremiah is no less distinct: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land" (Jer. 23:5-8. Read especially chapters 30, 31 and 33). There is scarcely a prophet, indeed, that does not touch upon the subject; and in such plain words that, had not Zion been confounded with the Church, no one could have doubted of God's intentions towards His ancient people. If, moreover, the testimony of the prophets had been less precise, the argument of Paul in Romans 11 should have sufficed to teach us that He will never forego His purposes of grace and blessing towards the seed of Abraham; for, after showing that God hath not cast away His people (Israel),

he says: "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (25-27). Two things, indeed, are clear from this scripture; that blessing is reserved for Israel, and that their Deliverer shall come out of Zion; showing that they must be in their own land previous to the blessing here described.

There are, however, several stages in their restoration before this full result spoken of by Paul is reached. A portion will return to Palestine in unbelief. This is certain from the fact that Zechariah describes their conversion in the land by the appearing of the Lord (Zech. 22:9-14; 13:1. See also Isa. 17:10-11; 28:14-15). While in their unbelief they will build a temple, and seek to restore their sacrificial services; and thus will pave the way for the setting up by the antichrist of the abomination of desolation in the holy place, of which our Lord forewarned His disciples (Matt. 24:15; see also Rev. 11:1, 2; Isa. 66:1-6). There will be, however, a remnant in the midst of their unbelieving brethren who will stay themselves upon God, who, not yet knowing their Messiah, will cry to the Lord in their distress, and will be preserved from the abominations into which the mass of the nation will fall. These are the elect remnant whose experiences are so largely developed in the Psalms, and in some of the prophets.

The restoration of the ten tribes will be effected after the Lord has taken His kingdom. Inasmuch as they had no part in the rejection and crucifixion of Christ, although they will be judged for their own sins, they will be spared the fearful and peculiar trials through which their brethren will have to pass, in consequence of their acceptance of, and connection with, the antichrist. It is therefore not until after the return of Christ that He will bring to light and restore this long-lost portion of His people. Ezekiel describes the method of their restoration: "As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you; and I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against Me: and I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord" The rest are brought, and the prophet proceeds: "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers" (Eze. 20:33-44; also 34). Jeremiah goes farther, and describes their coming into the land in language of singular beauty and pathos: "For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God. For thus saith the Lord, Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save Thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in

a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn” Then he proceeds to declare still further the purpose of the Lord concerning His people, and their consequent heritage of joy: “Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the Lord” (Jer. 31:6-14).

The ten tribes thus brought back, we are told, moreover, that they will be united together with Judah under the happy and glorious sway of their Messiah; that “they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more,” and that God’s servant “David [the true David, Christ] shall be their Prince forever” (Eze. 37:21-28).

We thus see that God has not forgotten His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:4-8); for while Israel failed in responsibility, and forfeited all claim upon God, He yet in faithfulness to His own word, in the wonders of His grace, will perform all that He has spoken. And the time draws near when Israel, once again restored to their own land, “shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit” (Isa. 27:6). For “thus saith the Lord: If My covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David My servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them” (Jer. 33:25-26).

The Blessed Hope: the Apostasy and the Antichrist

In the interval between the rapture of the saints and the appearing of Christ, the earth will be the scene of some of the most awful events which the world has ever witnessed. Among these will be the apostasy—the open abandonment of all profession of Christianity, yea, the denial both of the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22), and the appearance of the man of sin, the son of perdition, or the antichrist. Paul has given us most distinct and precise instruction upon these subjects. False teachers had sought to disturb the minds of the Thessalonian believers by alleging that the day of the Lord was already come. It was to meet this error that he wrote, “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand (the day of the Lord is present). Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he himself (the words “as God” should be omitted) sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:1-4). We are, therefore, plainly warned that “the falling away” (the apostasy), and the man of sin, will be seen in the interval between the rapture of the saints and the day of the Lord. For the apostle grounds his exhortation to these believers on the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him. As another has explained this scripture: “Their gathering together unto Christ in the air was a demonstration of the impossibility of the day of the Lord being already come. Moreover with regard to this last he presents two considerations: first, the day could not be already come, since Christians were not yet gathered to the Lord, and they were to come with Him; second, the wicked one who was then to be judged had not yet appeared, so that the judgment could not be executed.”

Thereon the apostle proceeds to show that until the Church is caught away this consummation and embodiment of wickedness cannot be reached. “And now ye know what withholdeth” (that which restrains) “that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed (vss. 6-8). In the light, then, of this and other scriptures, we may trace a little both the “falling away,” and the man of sin.

1. The Apostasy. This was foreseen and predicted from the earliest days of Christianity. Our Lord Himself plainly points to it in some of His parables, and never speaks of the gradual diffusion of the truth until the whole world should be brought to confess Him as Lord. On the other hand He compares the kingdom of heaven, as seen in the world, “unto leaven” (and leaven in the Scriptures has generally the significance of corruption) “which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened” (Matt. 13:33; see also the parable of the tares, and of the mustard seed, in the same chapter). Paul, moreover, tells the elders of the Church at Ephesus, “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). And passing by his allusions to the subject, we find in his two epistles to

Timothy (1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3) express descriptions of the evils of the “latter times,” and of “the perilous times” of “the last days.” What can be, indeed, more direct and emphatic than the scripture cited from 2 Thessalonians? For he there warns the saints to whom he writes that the mystery of iniquity was already working, and though for the time restrained, would at last, when the restraint was removed, rise so rapidly and mightily that, passing over all bounds, it would finally reach its consummation in that fearful being who would oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, and demand and receive the homage which is due to God alone. Peter also speaks of the evil of the last days, and Jude too, and especially in its form of apostasy; and in the Revelation we are permitted to behold its final form in “Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (Rev. 17:5).

To understand this aright it must be borne in mind, that when the saints are caught away, the Church in its outward form, that is the profession of Christianity, will still remain. Only real Christians will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. There will, therefore, be thousands (not to say millions) of mere nominal believers left behind. And doubtless this profession will at the outset be maintained; and many churches and chapels, and other places where professing Christians meet, will carry on as before their religious services. But now that He that restrained the development of the mystery of iniquity—the Spirit of God in the Church—now that He is gone, evil will be unbridled and hearts that shrunk before from receiving teachings, infidel in their character, which undermined the authority of the word of God, and the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, will soon fall completely under their sway. Yea, in the solemn and awful language of Scripture, “God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:11-12). Thus they will be gradually prepared to fall under the influence and power of antichrist, and therewith utterly to abandon even the form of Christianity. And it is not a little remarkable, as one has said, “that the apostasy will develop itself under the three forms in which man has been in relationship with God: Nature—it is the man of sin unrestrained, who exalts himself; Judaism—he sits as God in the temple of God; Christianity—it is to this that the term apostasy is directly applied in the passage before us” (2 Thess. 2). How fearful the prospect! And how sad it is to notice this mystery of iniquity so plainly working in the present day, boldly rearing its head in the pulpits of Christendom, and proclaiming, without let or hindrance, doctrines which subvert the very foundations of revealed truth, and thereby preparing the way, as soon as the Church is gone, for the advent of the man of sin.

2. The Antichrist. If we now consider a little more closely the character of this personage we shall have a clearer understanding of the whole subject. He is mentioned as the man of sin, as we have already seen in connection with the apostasy; but we may find traces of him both in the Old and New Testaments. He is termed “the king” in Daniel (11:36), the “idol shepherd” in Zechariah (11:17); but it is in the epistles of John that he is specified as the antichrist (1 John 2:18-22 John 1:7). In Revelation he is termed a “beast.”

Now it must be distinctly understood that antichrist is not a figurative term for some evil principle or system, but that it indicates an actual person. Whoever will take the trouble to read the various scriptures in which he is mentioned will at once perceive this. There is reason, moreover, to conclude that he will be not a Gentile, but a Jew. Thus our Lord, doubtless in allusion to this incarnation of evil, says, “If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (John 5:43);

and this is inconceivable, excepting he were of their own nation. Indeed he will present himself as the Messiah in his antagonism to Christ, and thus he is termed “the king” in Daniel, who, speaking of him, says that he will not “regard the God of his fathers,” plainly pointing out his Jewish lineage as well as his apostate character. Indeed he tells us that he will “exalt himself... above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done” (Dan. 11:36 et seq).

If we now turn to the book of Revelation, we shall find both his rise and the character of his actings described. Before, however, entering upon this, it will be necessary to recall the reader’s attention to the Gentile monarchies; three of which will precede, and the last be contemporaneous with the antichrist. As revealed to Daniel, and by him announced to Nebuchadnezzar, four monarchies were to reach down to the end. Those of Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece have appeared, and passed away. The fourth, symbolized by the legs of iron, and the “feet part of iron and of clay,” is the last; for in the vision which Nebuchadnezzar saw, “a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces... and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (Dan. 2:34-35).

This last is the Roman empire—first in its pristine energy and resistless strength, as set forth under the emblem of iron, and then in its final form of ten kingdoms, foreshadowed by the ten toes, welded together in one confederation under a supreme head. Now in Revelation 13 we have described first of all the rise of the imperial power, of the Roman empire in its final form. John says, “And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up from the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy” (Rev. 13:1). To cite the words of another, “The sea sets forth the unformed mass of the people under a troubled state of the world— people in great agitation, like the restless waves of the deep. And it is out of that mass of anarchy and confusion that an imperial power rises” The “beast” that thus appears is characterized by having seven heads and ten horns, which prepares us for the statement that “the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority” (vs. 2), inasmuch as we find the dragon himself so distinguished in the previous chapter (12:3); and this transfer of characteristics, as marking the source of the “beast’s” power, is subsequent, it should be remarked, to Satan’s expulsion from heaven (12:9). This is indicated moreover in another way. “The crowns were upon the heads of the dragon, but upon the horns of the beast; that is, in the Roman empire you have the exercise of the power represented as a matter of fact, but in Satan’s case merely as a matter of principle, or the root of the thing. It is a question of source and character, not history.”

We have, then, here set before us the final form of the Gentile power, animated and energized by Satan, and possessing in itself all the features that marked each of its predecessors (vs. 2; see Dan. 7:4-6). The seven heads signify the successive forms of power that have existed, but now concentrated in the “beast”; the ten horns are kings, and these ten will finally unite under one supreme head. “The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (Rev. 17:9-13). There will be such a display of power as the world has never seen; and since both its source and energy are alike Satanic, it will all be directed against God and His people. “And he (the beast) opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blasphemise His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given

unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given unto him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:6-8). It will be a time of open antagonism against God, and therefore of fearful tribulation for the saints.

In connection with all this there arises another “beast,” not out of the sea, as was the case with his predecessor, but out of the earth, at a time therefore when there is settled government, under the order and sway indeed of the first beast. This is the antichrist. He has “two horns like a lamb, and spake like a dragon” (vs. 11). He is thus an imitator of, while in direct antagonism to, Christ; but his voice reveals his true character. He acts, as will be seen, as a kind of deputy of the first “beast;” exercising his power, and causing “the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed” (vs. 12). He, moreover, works miracles, or seeming miracles, and thereby deceiving the dwellers upon the earth, he causes that they should make an image to the first beast, and worship it. And the more effectually to accomplish his purposes he has “power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (vss. 15-17).

There will be thus a kind of mock trinity, composed of Satan, the first beast, and the false prophet (Rev. 19:20); and the object of all their strivings will be to exclude God from the earth, and to usurp His place in the minds of men. The first beast, it will be seen, is the supreme secular power; the second, or the antichrist, acting under the first, has his domain in the religious sphere; while Satan is the inspirer and energy of both. We cannot here go into further details, as we shall see something more of the actings of antichrist in connection with the great tribulation. But it is well to remind ourselves that all the workings of error, and all the activities of men’s minds, apart from Christ, have but one goal; for they all look towards, and will finally be embodied in this hateful antagonist of God and His Christ. John warns the believers of his day that the spirit of antichrist was already abroad (1 John 4:3); and it is necessary therefore, especially at a time when infidelity is ever waxing bolder, to be on the watch, and to ponder well these delineations of the coming man of sin, so that we may be preserved, in the grace of our God, from all association with that which, as it is the offspring of Satan, is also the mark of hostility to Christ. At the present moment it is especially necessary to be vigilant, for there are many indications abroad that Satan is busily employed in marshalling and training his forces for the coming conflict. But, as ever, his movements are most subtle. Not yet does he dare to avow open antagonism to Christ; but he can, and does, influence the minds of men against the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and he uses for this purpose those who are its avowed teachers. Our foes are they of our own household. But as long as we adhere to the word of God—refusing human wisdom and human reasonings—and look to be guided alone by the Holy Spirit, we shall escape the snare, and be kept true to Christ.

The Blessed Hope: the Appearing of Christ

The difference between the Lord's coming and His appearing is, that in the former case He comes for His saints, and in the latter with His saints. The kingdom therefore is always connected with His appearing, as it is then that He will assume His power, and "have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psalm 72:8). This event will be totally unexpected. Buried in profound slumber, and deaf to all warning, the world, under the strong delusion which has been sent upon it, will have believed a lie, Satan's falsehood, and trusted his masterpiece, the antichrist. Men will have at length found their happiness in forgetting God; and hence "as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:38, 39). Yes, so sudden will it be, bursting with horror upon an astonished and careless world, that "as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day" (Luke 17:24).

But for the more intelligent conception of this wonderful event, it is advisable to obtain a general idea of the state of things then existing. Towards the close of the tribulation, there will be a coalition of hostile powers against the Jews. It is thus spoken of in one of the Psalms: "They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" (Psalm 83:3-4). The chief actors in this confederacy would seem to be the Assyrian, so often spoken of by Isaiah (see Isa. 10:24; Isa. 14:25), otherwise the king of the north, or the little horn of Daniel 8, the first "beast," that is the head of the revived Roman empire, and the false prophet—the antichrist (Rev. 13). Zechariah refers to this when he cries in the name of the Lord, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it" (Zech. 12:2-3). It is Satan, as ever, who inspires the hearts of these enemies of Israel, but the Lord uses them to chastise the apostate nation, and hence Zechariah also says, "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (14:1-2). In Revelation we find other chief actors in the scene, though their hostility is there described as against the Lamb and against His saints, and presumably, therefore, we have there a later development of their schemes, occasioned by the appearing of Christ. John says, "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army" (Rev. 19:19).

Combining these accounts, together with the additional details to be found in Zechariah, the order of events may be indicated. All nations are gathered to battle against Jerusalem, and "the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city" (Zech. 14:2). But at this

juncture, when they are wreaking their vengeance upon this unhappy people, when the malignant purposes of Satan are near their accomplishment, “then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle” (Zech. 14:3). But Satan’s instruments are not to be balked of their prey, and goaded on to the crowning act of their impious course, led by the “beast” and the false prophet, who have long been seeking to wipe out the name of God and His Christ from the earth, and to erase their memory from the hearts of men, they dare now “to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army” They thus rush to their doom; for “the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh” (Rev. 19:20-21). Isaiah speaks of this when he says, “He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the Wicked” (one) (Isa. 11:4); and Paul, “And then shall that wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thess. 2:8). Thus God arises, and His enemies are scattered.

If we turn now to another scripture, we shall find other details connected with the appearing. After describing the tribulation, our Lord proceeds: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,” etc (Matt. 24:29-30). The prophet Joel spoke in like manner: “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come” (Joel 2:30-31). There will be thus signs above and below to herald the appearing of Christ, when He comes with ten thousands of His saints, when “every eye shall see Him, and they [also] which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him” (Rev. 1:7).

It will, therefore, be a scene of awful and impressive grandeur; for it will be the “appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13)—God’s public display in His own glory of the One who was once rejected and crucified, but who now returns as the Son of man to take up the sovereignty of the whole world. And them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him (1 Thess. 4:14), associated in glory with their Lord, as they were once associated with Him in His rejection; for He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed (2 Thess. 1:10).

Having touched upon the fact and manner of His appearing, we may indicate some of its accompanying events. One of these has already been noted—the destruction of His foes. Thereon follows the conversion of Israel: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him,

as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart.... In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 12:13, 9-14:1). As soon as the church is removed, God will begin to act by His Spirit in the hearts of some of His ancient people—the remnant so constantly mentioned in the Psalm and the prophets; and these, as may be gathered from the Psalm and portions of Isaiah, will be bowed to the dust, under the sense of God’s holy indignation against His people Israel on account of their apostasy; and it is this feeling, combined with their fearful trouble, that gives character to their cries as there recorded. It is at this moment, when the furnace into which they have been cast burns most fiercely, and when they are hanging as it were over the abyss of utter destruction, that the

Lord appears for them, and they instantly recognize and look upon Him whom they have pierced. The true Joseph discovers Himself to His brethren, and they are at once plunged into bitter sorrow and humiliation on account of their, and their nation’s sin. But provision is made for this also in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and they can now cry, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the LORD: we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation” (Isa. 25:9).

It is not only the remnant in Jerusalem that will be affected; for we find that in connection with His appearing “He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matt. 24:31). Wherever they are found not one will escape the notice of His eye, but all will be brought to share in the blessings of the kingdom which He comes to establish. As we read in Isaiah, “He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (Isa. 11:12). It may be that this will not be completely accomplished until after the commencement of His reign; for after the display of His power and glory, after the Lord has come “with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire,” some of the saved are sent forth to declare His glory among the Gentiles; and it is said that “they (the Gentiles) shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to My holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD” (Isa. 66:15-20).

There is another event of great importance to be noted in connection with, and probably preparatory to, the establishment of the kingdom. After describing the destruction of the “beast” and the false prophet, and the slaughter of their followers, John says: “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled” (Rev. 20:1-3). Thus the Lord asserts His power in judgment upon the whole trinity of evil—Satan, the “beast,” and the false prophet—which had impiously risen up against Him, and blasphemously usurped His authority; and at the same time He delivers His people—the elect of Israel—and thereby clears the way for, and lays the foundations of, His millennial sway.

Leaving, however, the consideration of the kingdom itself to a future paper, we shall now ask the reader's attention to those whom Christ will associate with Himself in His reign. There are several distinct classes that will have this honor. Everyone understands that believers of this dispensation will reign with Christ. This is too plainly asserted to admit of a single doubt. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12). But it is not so generally apprehended that there are others to be singled out for this special exaltation; and yet this is as distinctly stated in the Scriptures. John says: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which [those who] had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4-6). The class sitting on thrones to whom judgment is given is composed of the armies that followed Christ out of heaven (Rev. 19:14)—the saints who had been caught up previously to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4), in a word, the Church, and perhaps the saints of previous dispensations. But there are two other classes; first, those who were martyred during the power of the antichrist— those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God; and secondly, those who stood aloof from his seductions, and, unmoved by his threats, refused to receive his distinguishing sign. As a special mark of the Lord's favor and approbation, in recompense for their fidelity amid the general unfaithfulness, they are made partakers of the first resurrection, and consequently of association with Christ in His kingdom. They share both in the priestly and kingly dignity—the wondrous honor they inherit through the grace of Him who had marked their sufferings, and rejoiced in their constancy to His name and testimony. It is not forgotten that the force of this passage is often explained away by the contention that the resurrection here spoken of is figurative. If so, the resurrection and judgment described in the latter part of the chapter will also be figurative, and thus the whole truth of a final judgment will be frittered away. No; words so plain cannot be robbed of their significance, to say nothing of their perfect agreement with other portions of the word of God. Blessed prospect for the saints of God! And how will they rejoice, not so much in their association with Christ in the splendors of His kingdom, unspeakable as will be the honor, but in the fact of His receiving the place belonging to Him both by title and purchase! There are even great voices in heaven to celebrate the event, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats (thrones), fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned" (Rev. 11:15-18). But with what terror will this poor world be filled, when they behold the One whom they refused and rejected coming in power and great glory, to judge everything now according to the standard of His immutable righteousness! And He will come "as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:2, 3).

"Can this be He, once wont to stray

A pilgrim on the world's highway;

Opprest by power, and mocked by pride,
The Nazarene—the Crucified?”

The Blessed Hope: the Great Tribulation

There will be also, in connection with the sway of the antichrist, another event of transcendent importance. Notices of it are found scattered throughout the prophets, as well as parts of the New Testament scriptures. It is generally designated as the great tribulation; but if the subject is closely examined, it will be seen that this is but one feature of this fearful time of trial through which those upon the earth at that period will have to pass. In fact there will be a time of unexampled trouble, both for the Jews and the Gentiles; and we propose in this paper to collect some of the information which Scripture affords upon this subject, as well as to show who are the saints that will have to pass through this burning fiery furnace.

1. The time of trouble for the Jews. Jeremiah distinctly speaks of this, and to understand it clearly we will cite the passage with its context: "Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them" (Jer. 30:2-9). Three things are evident from this scripture. First, that Israel (as we have seen) will yet be restored to their own land; that after this—or after the restoration of many—there will be a time of unparalleled trouble; and thirdly, that then will be their final deliverance and blessing. The connection of these three things fixes the period of their tribulation, and shows that it will be after their return to their own land, and before the appearing of the Lord.

If we now turn to the prophet Daniel, we shall find similar testimony. After speaking of the actings of the antichrist (Dan. 11:36-45), he says: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1). Again, we find that, when in their own land, and in connection with the doings of the antichrist, and hence after the Lord has returned for His people, and before His appearing, the Jews will pass through a time of trouble such as there never was before.

Our Lord speaks of the same thing. Forewarning His disciples, in answer to their question, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" He says, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the

prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand,) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house." "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:15-22; also Mark 13:14-20). This scripture is extremely important on many accounts. It connects the tribulation spoken of with an event foretold by Daniel, and hence with the antichrist, and also reveals the cause as well as the period of this unexampled trouble (See Dan. 12:11 with 9:27).

Now connecting the several scriptures given, we learn that after the restoration of the Jews, exposed again, as in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes (see Dan. 11:21-31), to the hostility of the king of the north (Syria), the Jews for protection enter into a covenant with the first "beast"—the head of the revived Roman empire. It is to this Daniel refers when he says, "And he" (that is the Roman prince) "shall confirm a" (not the, but a) "covenant with many" (or rather the many) "for one week," that is for a week of years—seven years. But we are further told that "in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease" (Dan. 9:27). By the covenant which this prince had entered into with the Jews, it is evident that he had engaged to protect them in their religious observances; but now, in association with the antichrist, he is false to his treaty—orders the daily sacrifice to be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate to be set up (Dan. 12:11) in the holy place. That is, an idol is set up in the temple (Read 2 Thess. 2:4; and compare Rev. 13:11-17). It is to this our Lord refers in the passage we have cited; and He gives the setting up of this "abomination of desolation" as the signal of flight for the godly remnant who will be found at that time in Jerusalem. Thereon a decree will be issued to the effect that all are to worship the image that has thus usurped the place of God, and together with this the time of tribulation will commence—raging with unheard—of fury against all who refuse to obey this decree, and indeed against the Jews as such, and extending, as we may see further on, throughout the whole world.

In the mercy of God this fiery trial is limited to the half week, and will, therefore, only last three years and a half. This is the forty and two months, or the twelve hundred and sixty days, so constantly mentioned in the book of Revelation. This coincides with the testimony of the two witnesses (Rev. 11) and the divine judgments—the woes—therewith connected; and during this period also the devil, cast down to earth, vomits out his great wrath against the remnant of the woman's seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:9-17). And it is he, the dragon, that gives power unto the "beast," that inspires all the actings of the head of the Roman empire, and of the antichrist against the people of God. Combining these things together some idea may be formed of the unequalled character of this tribulation. It is satanic both in its source and energy, containing every element of suffering which Satan's malignant hate can invent and compound; but it is used by God to chasten the Jewish nation for their crowning sin in the rejection of their Messiah. If we add, that even the godly subjects of it will have no sense of God's favor, though His Spirit is working in their hearts, we shall in some degree understand the words of our Lord: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be"

This tribulation, as already said, specially affects the Jews. The passages cited from Jeremiah and Daniel confessedly apply to them, and the express reference of our Lord to the latter prophet,

besides other indications in His discourse, leaves no room for doubt that He also had the same people in view. The past history of the nation, and the awful guilt they incurred in crucifying their Messiah, will help us to understand both its reason and object, while at the same time it is a consolation to remember that in every case where it is spoken of, it is speedily followed by the deliverance and blessing of God's elect remnant.

2. Besides "Jacob's trouble," we read also of the great tribulation. This is mentioned in Revelation 7. In the first part of the chapter four angels are seen "standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (vss. 1-3). Accordingly one hundred and forty-four thousand are sealed out of the twelve tribes, God's spared remnant of Israel. Thereon we read, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (vss. 9-10). It is concerning this innumerable multitude that one of the twenty-four elders asked John, "Who are these arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (vss. 13-14). Now we are only stating what every one acquainted with the original readily admits, when we say that it should be read, "out of the great tribulation." This immense multitude, therefore, have been brought through it, and are in the scene before us a saved and rejoicing host. We have consequently a plain proof that there will be not only unparalleled trouble for the Jewish nation, but also, and probably about the same time (it may be a little before) a similar period of tribulation for the Gentiles—"all nations, kindreds, and people, and tongues." This would seem to be the same event as that of which our Lord speaks as "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10). As to its source and character, little if anything is revealed; but it is sufficiently accounted for by the fearful state into which the world will be plunged after the removal of the Church, and by the fact that the "beast," who will open "his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven," will have power "over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:5-8).

3. The question now occurs, whether the church will be found in the tribulation? If not, who are the saints that are seen in it? As the subject is important, it may be advisable to recall the Scripture teaching on this point. In the first place it is abundantly clear, if our interpretation of the Scripture is correct, that the church will be caught away before this period. Thus we find in Revelation 19 that the beast and the false prophet (the antichrist) are taken and destroyed at the Lord's appearing (vss. 11-21). In 2 Thessalonians we also learn that the Lord will consume that wicked one (the antichrist) "with the brightness of His coming" But we are taught in Colossians that "when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (ch. 3:4). In the Scripture already referred to (Rev. 19) it is also said that "the armies which were in heaven followed Him" (the Word

of God) “upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (vs. 14). From verse 8 we gather that the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. The saints (the church) in both of these Scriptures are represented as coming with Christ, and hence it is undeniable that they must have been caught up to be with Him previously. The structure of the book of Revelation shows the same thing. “Write,” said the Lord to John, “the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter”—after these (Rev. 1:19). The first chapter contains what he saw; the second and third, “the things which are” —the church dispensation; and the rest of the book deals with the things after the church period has closed. Hence, immediately after the third chapter, the twenty-four elders are seen in heaven sitting upon thrones, clothed in white raiment, and with crowns of gold on their head (Rev. 4:4). Who are these? Their crowns bespeak their kingly, as their dress reveals their priestly character, and hence points back plainly to Revelation 1:6. They are, therefore, the saints, and thus are found translated to heaven before the commencement of the tribulation.

But it may be inquired, Who then are the great multitude which no man could number of Revelation 7, who are distinctly said to come out of the great tribulation? Now if the elders symbolize the church—not excluding the saints of past dispensations—it is clear that this multitude cannot point to the same class. The elders are in heaven, and this redeemed multitude are upon the earth; and this distinction helps us to understand who they are. They are, as described, a vast number of Gentiles brought through the tribulation into blessing, and will, therefore, enter with Christ upon the glories and blessings of His millennial kingdom; nay, they are to have a special place under His sway. “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (vss. 15-17).

The other branch of the question remains, Who are the saints seen in the tribulation? They are God’s elect remnant from among the Jews. This may be seen from Matthew 24. It is of those in Judaea our Lord speaks (vs. 16). They are to pray that their flight might not be on the Sabbath (the seventh) day (vs. 20)—a direction that would have no significance except for a godly Jew under law; they are warned against false Christs (vss. 23-24)—a warning which would scarcely be understood by Christians who know that Christ is at the right hand of God; and finally, the elect are not gathered until after the tribulation, and the appearing, whereas, as we have seen, the church will appear with Christ. Indications of the same character could be collected if needful from the Revelation; but we have already shown that the elders in heaven prove that the church could not be on the earth during the tribulation. There is therefore abundant evidence to show that they are godly Jews, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who will be cast into this burning fiery furnace, which is to be heated “seven times more than it was wont to be heated” Their sorrows and cries during this time of unequalled anguish are traced and expressed in many of the Psalm Believers of this dispensation are “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:9-10). For it is to them that our Lord addresses these words, “Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev. 3:10).

The Blessed Hope: the Hope of the Church

We propose, if the Lord will, to treat in successive papers upon the subject of the Lord's coming, with its accompanying and subsequent events. As it is becoming every day more manifest that we are in the midst of the perilous times (2 Tim. 3), it behooves the Lord's people to be increasingly occupied with the expectation of His return. It is now many years since the cry was raised, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" (Matt. 25:6). Up until that time the Church had fallen into profound slumber, drugged by the opiate influences of the world, so that the doctrine of the Lord's return for His saints was forgotten, ignored, or denied. But when, through the action of the Spirit of God, this cry went forth, thousands were startled from their sleep, and, trimming their lamps, went forth once again to meet the Bridegroom. For a season they lived daily in the hope of His return; and so mightily did this hope act upon their hearts and lives that it detached them from everything—every association, habit, and practice—unsuitable to Him for whom they waited, and kept them with their loins girt, and their light's burning, as those who were waiting for their Lord (Luke 12:35-36). But time went on; and while the doctrine of the Second Advent has been apprehended and taught by increasing numbers, and while the truth has been undoubtedly the support and consolation of many godly souls, it is yet a question if large numbers of the saints of God have not lost its freshness and power. For is it not patent to all observers, that the standard of separation is becoming lower and lower? That worldliness is on the increase? that saints are permitting themselves associations out of which they have professedly come? that many of us, therefore, are in danger of once more falling asleep, even with the doctrine of the hope upon our lips?

If this be so—and it is the subject of common remark—the time has come when the truth on this subject needs to be pressed home again upon the hearts and consciences of believers. For the Lord is at hand, and He desires that His people should be on the watch-tower, longing and eagerly waiting for His return. Surely therefore it is high time to awake out of sleep, knowing that our salvation is nearer than when we believed, "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37). And He Himself has said, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37).

We have in these remarks assumed, and now we proceed to prove from the Scriptures, **THAT THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS IS THE DISTINCTIVE HOPE OF THE CHURCH.** This might be done from almost every book of the New Testament. We shall cite enough to place the subject beyond a doubt.

First, our Lord Himself prepared His disciples to maintain, after His departure, the expectation of His return. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over His household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, Whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That He shall make him ruler over all His goods" (Matt. 24:45-47). He then proceeds to characterize the evil servant as one who should say, "My

Lord delayeth His coming,” (vs. 48), and indicates the punishment into which such an one should fall. The next two parables—that of the virgins, to which reference has been made, and that of the talents—teach distinctly the same lesson, and the more forcibly from the fact that the virgins who fell asleep, and the servants who received the talents, are the same who are dealt with respectively on the Lord’s return.

The same instruction is found in Mark’s gospel. “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. [For the Son of man is] as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mark 13:33-37).

In the gospel of Luke the same truth is repeated again and again. We have quoted one striking passage (Luke 12:35-37). Another may be added: “He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come” (Luke 19:12, 13). Then, as in Matthew, we find him coming and examining the servants as to their use of the money entrusted to them (vs. 15).

One scripture from John’s gospel will suffice. The disciples were plunged into sorrow at the prospect of their Lord’s departure from them. How does He meet the state of their souls? He says, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3).

The four gospels, therefore, unite in distinct testimony to the return of the Lord for His people, and in the proclamation that this event constitutes their hope during His absence. We pass now to the Acts and the epistles.

Turning first of all to the Acts, what do we find? After His resurrection, the Lord had appeared to His disciples, “being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). The time having come for His ascension, He led them out as far as Bethany (Luke 24:50); and when He had ended His instructions, “while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11). Could any language be more precise? or, construed by the circumstances, be more significant? or, we may add, less likely to be misunderstood? They had seen their Lord depart from them. He was taken up, and they watched His receding form until a cloud intercepted Him from their gaze; and while they behold with mute astonishment, they receive the message that the One they had seen depart should return in like manner (and therefore in Person) as they had seen Him go into heaven. The wonder is, that with these distinct words the Church could have ever lost the hope of the Lord’s return.

The evidence of the epistles is no less clear and decided. "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming" (revelation, margin) "of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:7). "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). "How ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:9-10; see also 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-18; 2 Thess. 1:7; 2:1; 3:5). "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). "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. 9:28. Also James 5:7-8; 1 Pet. 1:7, 1 Pet. 3 John 3; Rev. 3:11; Rev. 22:7,12,20).

Although these are only some of the scriptures which might be adduced, it will at once be seen how largely the subject is dealt with in the word of God; and on examination it will be discovered that this is because it is bound up, interwoven, with the very essence of Christianity. Take away the hope of the Lord's return, and you at once rob Christianity of its true character. It cannot be too strongly asserted, that it is not a doctrine to be accepted or rejected at pleasure, but that it is a part and parcel of the truth itself, connected with the calling and place of the believer, his relationship to Christ, and his future blessedness. Hence, indeed, Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven; and every believer now is converted for the same thing. To be without this hope and expectation, therefore, is to be ignorant of the believer's portion in Christ.

It follows from this that the normal attitude of every believer is that of waiting for Christ. Nay, more, every one brought upon Christian ground has this characteristic, though he may be all unconscious of it; for the Word says that the ten virgins, five of whom were foolish, took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Their profession therefore—even though they had no oil—was that they were waiting for Christ.

Is this then the attitude of the reader? Are you waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus? Is this the one blessed hope that cheers your soul along your lonely pilgrim path? Are your eyes ever fixed upon the Bright and Morning Star? Or are you so absorbed in present things that, like the five foolish virgins, you have grown heavy, and fallen asleep? If, alas! it be so, let the words, "Behold, I come quickly," "Behold the Bridegroom," rouse you from your slumbers, even while there is delay, lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. Or perhaps you know the truth of His coming. But the question, beloved reader, is, Are you waiting for Christ? To know the doctrine is one thing; but it is quite another to be living hourly and daily in the hope of the Lord's return. If you are waiting, your affections are all centered on Him whom you expect; you are apart from everything which is not according to His mind and will; you are sitting loose to all that nature holds dear; and with a full heart you can respond to His announcement of His speedy coming. "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The Blessed Hope: the Kingdom of Christ

In the present dispensation grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5:21), in the eternal state righteousness will dwell (2 Pet. 3:13); but in the millennial kingdom righteousness will reign. This indeed will be its characteristic according to that word of the prophet, "Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness" (Isa. 32:1), or to another of the psalmist, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Thy kingdom is a right scepter" (Psalm 45:6). There are, indeed, two types in Scripture of Christ as King—David and Solomon. David portrays Him in figure as King of righteousness, and Solomon as Prince of peace. These two are combined in Melchizedek, king of Salem "first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace" (Heb. 7:2). These two things, it will be seen, are the distinguishing features of the sway of Christ, the one preceding, and indeed producing the other; for "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance forever" (Isa. 32:17).

It will be therefore evident to the reader that Christ can be in no sense said to be King of the Church. To it He stands in a closer relationship, even that of Head; for believers now are united to Him by the Spirit of God, and are consequently members of His body. True, He is a King as to title, though at present He is a rejected King; and it is as true that the believer owns no authority but His; but it is a confusion of dispensations to assert that Christ is now reigning as King. He will do so; but it will not be until He comes forth in the manner described in the last paper. At the present moment He is sitting at the right hand of God, and there He will continue to sit until His enemies are made His footstool. Then He will appear, and proceed to put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:24-25). This is the kingdom—the kingdom as so explained—that falls to be considered in the present paper. The kingdom of heaven exists now (Matt. 13), so also the kingdom of God (John 3), and believers are said to be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13), but the reign of Christ as King is confined to the millennium. Thus Mary was told concerning Him, that "the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32). It is obvious that this promise has never yet been fulfilled; for when He was presented to the Jews as their Messiah they would not receive Him, and finally cried, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). But every word of God must stand, and thus He will yet be the King of Israel, and not only of Israel, for as Son of man He inherits still wider glories, "and all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Dan. 7:27). Israel will be the center of this universal dominion, and it will be through them that He will govern the nations upon the earth.

First, then, on the assumption of His throne, which the reader will now understand is consequent upon His appearing, He will act in judgment after the pattern of David; that is, He will judge everything He finds according to righteousness. Hence the psalmist says, "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment" (Psalm 72:1-2). He will therefore gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and "the Lord shall be King overall the

earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one” (Zech. 14:9).

We have a remarkable scene of this character in Matthew 25. Having established His throne in righteousness, all nations are gathered before Him for judgment. This is expressly connected with His kingdom: “When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations” (vss. 31-32). It is the only time that our Lord applies the title of King to Himself: “Then shall the King say unto them,” etc (vss. 34-40). This shows that the kingdom has been founded—marking, indeed, the commencement of His millennial sway. If now we examine the features of this session of judgment, it will be manifest that there is no pretext whatever for confounding it with that of the great white throne (Rev. 20), or for deducing from it the popular idea of a general judgment—of believers and unbelievers together. It is, in fact, a judgment of living nations; for there is no scriptural precedent for terming the dead “the nations” There are three classes here apparent—the sheep, the goats, and the “brethren” of the King. It will be observed that the way in which the nations had treated the King’s “brethren” becomes the ground of their classification, whether among the sheep or among the goats. This fact is therefore the key to the whole scene. Who then are the King’s “brethren”? Very clearly they must be Jews—His kinsmen according to the flesh, but also His true servants. We may thus probably find a clue to them in Isaiah 66, in a passage already cited. There we find that after the Lord has come in judgment some of the saved are sent to declare His glory among the Gentiles. So in the scene before us, the King’s “brethren” have evidently gone forth as His messengers among the nations, and they are therefore invested with a special place and authority, even as the ambassadors of a sovereign now are clothed with all the honor and dignity of the one they represent. The principle on which they are sent forth is that on which the Lord sent out the twelve: “He that receiveth you receiveth Me” (Matt. 10:40). Hence the King says to those on His right hand, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me,” and they are made to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. In like manner He says to those on His left hand, “Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt. 25:34-46).

Thus Christ as the King, by the display of His power in righteous judgment, obtains universal dominion; for “the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him” (Psalm 72:10-11). Thereon, having put down all rule and all authority and power, He reigns as Prince of peace. “His name shall endure forever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed” (Psalm 72:17).

Leaving the reader to study for himself in the psalms and prophets the details of His millennial kingdom, we may point out a few of its leading features.

Jerusalem will recover its former glory; nay, its future condition will as far surpass its former, as the glory of Christ as King will outshine that of David and Solomon. “The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in My wrath I smote thee, but in My favor have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought” Again: “The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box

together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations" (Isa. 60:10-15). We likewise read: "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isa. 62:3; see many other passages of the same character); and surely it is only fitting that the metropolis of Messiah's kingdom should be suited to the worthiness, dignity, and glory of the King!

The temple and its services will be revived in surpassing splendor (Eze. 40-46). Some have felt a difficulty as to sacrifices being restored; but the difficulty vanishes when it is remembered that these sacrifices will be connected with an earthly people, and an earthly temple, and will be commemorative in their character. In the old dispensation they had no efficacy whatever apart from their reference to Christ; for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Heb. 10:4); and in the millennium they will look back to that one sacrifice for sin which was offered upon the cross, as those under the Mosaic economy foreshadowed it. They will, therefore, but recall to the grateful, worshipping hearts of God's people, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son which cleanseth from all sin.

All nations will come up to Jerusalem to worship. We thus read in the prophet: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:2-3). Zechariah also speaks of a similar thing. He says: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles" (Zech. 14:16).

The animal creation will share in the peace and blessing of that day. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock" (Isa. 65:25; see also Isa. 11:6-9). It is added to the above scripture, "And dust shall be the serpent's meat," showing, we suppose, that the serpent will be excluded from the deliverance from thralldom under which even the brute creation has hitherto groaned. But as we know, "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21).

The curse will be [almost entirely] removed from the earth. When Adam fell, the ground was cursed on his account. Whatever the alleviation of this sentence under Noah, it is not completely abrogated until the reign of Messiah. The psalmist accordingly sings, "Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us" (Psalm 67:5-6). Amos in like manner prophesies, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt" (Amos 9:13). For it is at this time that "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the

excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God” (Isa. 35:1-2).

There will be no death, excepting in the way of judgment, throughout the whole of the thousand years. “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed” (Isa. 65:20). The meaning of this scripture would seem to be, that death will be entirely exceptional, and then only in the way of righteous judgment. The age of Methuselah may therefore not only be equaled, but surpassed, in this blessed period of Messiah’s reign.

All injustice will be instantly redressed. This is connected of necessity with the Messiah’s righteous rule. Hence we read, “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight” (Psalm 72:12-14). Men fondly dream that this is the goal of human enlightenment and progress; but they are ignorant of, or forget, the incurable corruption of human nature, and hence do not consider that even though the whole world were to obtain just and equal laws, they would fail either in their administration or application. No; Christ is the only hope for the earth, as for the saint; for “He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity” (Psalm 98:9).

But, notwithstanding all these blessed features, there will be rebellions even under the reign of Christ. In Psalm 66 we read, “Through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee;” or, as it is in the margin, “yield feigned obedience” The same expression is found in another psalm. “As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto Me,” or “yield feigned obedience” (Psalm 18:44). It would appear from these statements that the display of Christ’s power in judgment will be so overwhelming, as it surely will be in the judgment upon the nations assembled against Jerusalem, that many, not bowed in heart, will yet be terrified into the acceptance of His rule. They will profess subjection while their hearts are alienated from Him; hence they will be as easily tempted to renounce as to submit to His sway. Accordingly we find that after—perhaps not long after—the establishment of His throne, Gog, with a multitude of followers, “a great company, and a mighty army,” comes up against His people Israel, “as a cloud to cover the land” But he comes to meet with immediate and utter destruction, so great and overwhelming that “seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land” (Eze. 38-39).

Again, at the close of the millennium there is a still larger rebellion, directly attributed to the action of Satan. “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog [not to be confounded with the Gog of Ezekiel], to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city” (Rev. 20:7-9). Thus every dispensation closes with failure as a striking testimony to the character and nature of man. Tried in every way, without law and under law, under grace, and at last under the personal reign of the Messiah, he shows that he cannot be improved, that the flesh remains the same, that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, that the carnal mind is at enmity with God. The Jews chose a Caesar, yea,

a Barabbas, in preference to Christ; and finally man accepts Satan himself, and under his leadership goes to attack and destroy “the camp of the saints... and the beloved city” that are under the special protection of the glorified Messiah. The issue, could be but one. There remains nothing for God but to vindicate the righteousness of the throne of Christ; and accordingly we read that “fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever” (Rev. 20:9-10). Thus closes the period of the thousand years. It was introduced in judgment, and it is closed by judgment; but it will yet be the time of earth’s blessing and joy. For it must be remembered that Satan is bound until the close of the period, and hence while the flesh remains the same, the power of evil being thus absent, all the influences to which man is subject will be on the side of Christ. It will be a total reversal of the present state of things; so that the psalmist may well cry, “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth” (Psalm 96:11-13).

But we must leave the reader to enter for himself into a closer study of the subject. Abundant materials for the purpose will be found throughout the Scriptures; and if he but read in dependence upon the Spirit for guidance and teaching, and with his eye upon Christ, it will not be without profit and blessing.

The Blessed Hope: the New Jerusalem

So far we have treated only of the earthly characteristics of the millennium. It will be necessary, therefore, to consider also its heavenly aspect, as presented to us in the new Jerusalem. If the reader will turn to Revelation 19, he will observe that from the eleventh verse of that chapter down to the eighth verse of chapter 21, we have a series of consecutive events. It begins with the coming forth of the Lord Jesus, followed by the armies that were in heaven, to judgment; and then we have the destruction, as already seen, of the “beast,” the false prophet, and their hosts, the binding of Satan, the thousand years, the loosing of Satan, the great white throne, and the eternal state (which will be considered later). Immediately upon this we are led back, in the ninth verse, to a description of the new Jerusalem, which reaches onward to chapter 22; and in this scripture we have the character of the city during the millennium, and its relation, indeed, to the millennial earth.

John says: “And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God” (21:9-11). The first thing that strikes the reader is the designed contrast between this scripture and that in chapter 17: “And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters” (vs. 1). In this chapter we have Babylon depicted, in chapter 21 the new Jerusalem. The former is man’s city, and the latter God’s; the one the expression of what man is, the other the perfection of God’s thoughts, robed in the glory of God. Let the reader carefully ponder the contrast, and learn its divine lessons. Another thing must be remarked: the city is “the Bride, the Lamb’s wife” This determines its character. It is the Church which Christ has now presented “to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.... holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27), beautified with His own beauty, and having the glory of God. Its position is also to be noted. Both in the second and tenth verses it is seen to come down from God out of heaven; but a comparison of the two scriptures will show us the place the city occupies throughout the thousand years. In the tenth verse it is seen descending out of heaven from God; but after the similar statement in the second verse, John hears the proclamation, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,” showing that the city now had come down to, and rested upon, the new earth. The inference, therefore, is—and one which is abundantly substantiated from other scriptures—that in the tenth verse the city descends towards the millennial earth, but rests above it, over the earthly Jerusalem. Poised thus, as it were, above the earthly city, it will be a visible object of light and glory; and this perhaps may explain the language which the prophet addressed to Jerusalem, “The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory” (Isa. 60:19).

We may now examine some of its characteristics. (1) It is divine in its origin, and heavenly in its character. It comes down from God out of heaven. (2) It has “the glory of God: and her light was

like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal” Her light, therefore, is the outshining of the glory in which she is set; for jasper is a symbol of the glory of God (Rev. 4:3). The Church is glorified together with Christ in the glory of God, and as such is here displayed. In Revelation 21:18-19, it is stated that the building of the wall, and the first foundation, are both alike of jasper. The glory of God is thus the stability and security, as well as the light and beauty, of the heavenly city. But the wall excluded everything unsuitable to that glory, as well as guarded everything according to it. (3) The next feature is, that it “had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (vss. 12-14). It must be carefully observed that all this concerns the wall of the city, and its distinguishing characteristic is the number twelve—twelve angels, twelve tribes, and twelve apostles. As one has said, “It has twelve gates. Angels are become the willing doorkeepers of the great city, the fruit of Christ’s redemption work in glory. This marked the possession too, by man thus brought in the assembly to glory, of the highest place in the creation, and providential order of God, of which angels had previously been the administrators. The twelve gates are full human perfectness of governmental administrative power. The gate was the place of judgment. Twelve, we have often seen, notes perfection and governmental power. The character of it is noted by the names of the twelve tribes. God had so governed these. They were not the foundation; but this character of power was found there. There were twelve foundations; but these were the twelve apostles of the Lamb. They were, in their work, the foundation of the heavenly city. Thus the creative and providential display of power, the governmental (Jehovah), and the assembly once founded at Jerusalem, are all brought together in the heavenly city, the organized seat of heavenly power. It is not presented as the bride, though it be “the Bride, the Lamb’s wife” It is not in the Pauline character of nearness of blessing to Christ. It is the assembly as founded at Jerusalem under the twelve, the organized seat of heavenly power, the new and now heavenly capital of God’s government. (4) Then it is measured (vss. 15-17), indicating that it is owned and appropriated by God. The measurements are, it need hardly be said, symbolical—symbolical of a divinely—given perfectness. Thus the city is a cube—equal on every side—finite perfection. (5) Then we have the materials of which the city and the foundations were formed. Again we borrow the language of another: The city was formed, in its nature, in divine righteousness and holiness—gold transparent as glass. That which was now by the Word wrought in and applied to men below was the very nature of the whole place (comp. Eph. 4:24). The precious stones, or varied display of God’s nature, Who is light, in connection with the creature (seen in creation, Ezekiel 28; in grace in the high priest’s breastplate), now shown in permanent glory, adorned the foundations of the city. The gates had the moral beauty (every several gate was of one pearl) which attracted Christ in the assembly, and in a glorious way. That on which men walked, instead of bringing danger of defilement, was itself righteous and holy; the streets, all that men came in contact with, were righteousness and holiness—gold transparent as glass. (6) It has no temple. “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (vs. 22). A temple would speak of concealment, or of a special place where God manifested Himself to those who drew nigh to worship. But all this is past. Even now, while here, we have liberty of access into the holiest of all (Heb. 10); yea, our place is in the light as God is in the light. In the heavenly city, therefore, God is fully displayed.

“The Lamb is there, my soul—
There God Himself doth rest,
In love divine diffused through all,
With Him supremely blest.
God and the Lamb—’tis well,
I know that source divine
Of joy and love no tongue can tell,
Yet know that all is mine”

There is no need of created light. “And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (vs. 23). When He stands disclosed, His glory lightens the city, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

“But who that glorious blaze
Of living light shall tell?
There 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”

Having directed attention to the characteristics of the city, we may now pass to consider what is next indicated; namely, the relation of the city to the millennial earth. First we are told that “the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it” (vs. 24). Two slight alterations will make this scripture far more intelligible. The words “of them that are saved” are omitted in all the best editions of the New Testament, as being an unwarranted addition; and the word translated “into” should be given as “to” or “unto,” or otherwise it would seem as if the kings of the earth had access into the heavenly city! What we are taught then is, first, that the new Jerusalem will shine with such surpassing luster that the nations will walk in its light—the light of the glory in which it is set, and by which it is illumined. It will be thus suspended above the earthly Jerusalem, and from thence will transmit the rays of the glory of God by which it is encompassed and transfused. Moreover, the kings of the earth will render their homage by bringing their glory and honor, as offerings, unto it; thus recognizing it as the object of God’s delight, and the scene of the display of His presence and glory, because the throne of God and the Lamb are there.

It is then added that “the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into (unto) it. And there shall in no wise

enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (vss. 25-27). One cannot fail to be struck with the correspondency between this language and that addressed to the earthly Jerusalem by the prophet: "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought" (Isa. 60:11). And undoubtedly there will be an intimate relation between the two cities, similar to that between the holy place and the holy of holies in the tabernacle; though the distinction must ever be remembered, that the one city is heavenly, and the other earthly in its character. The open gates are an emblem of the perfect security which the city enjoys, there being "no adversary or evil occurrent," while the absence of night tells that evil has passed away, and hence there is perpetual day. It is not merely the absence of evil, but the impossibility of its entrance, which characterized the holy city; for none "but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" are found within.

Next we have the river of water of life and the tree of life. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve [manner of] fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:1-2). All this again speaks of the relation of the city to the millennial earth, and reveals the source of millennial life and blessedness. The throne of God and the Lamb are the fount, as ever, of grace and life; and the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations. The glorified only will feed upon the twelve fruits of the tree. Hence it is added, "There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there: and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever" (vss. 3-5). Adam after his fall was shut out of the garden, and God "placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). Now the tree of life is on either side of the street of the golden city, and the glorified saints find in its fruit sustenance and joy. The curse therefore is forever abolished; for the throne of God and the Lamb are there, and His servants serve Him perfectly, see His face, and have His name in their foreheads. Wondrous expressions of the full and perfect bliss of the redeemed! It is now repeated that there shall be no night there, and that they have no need of created light; for God Himself is the source of their light, as of their blessing, and His glory illuminates the whole scene. In this condition they will reign forever and ever, associated with Christ in all the glories of His royalty and kingdom.

It is therefore not only the earthly blessing we are admitted to view, but God has also brought before us the varied perfections and glories of this heavenly city, which will form such a prominent feature of the millennial period. We have not permitted ourselves to touch upon the question of communication between the heavenly and the earthly spheres. That such communication will exist is beyond a doubt; but upon its modes, or the exact way in which Christ will carry on the government of the earth as King, Scripture is silent. But we are told that "the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, the Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever" (Isa. 9:6-7).

Bring All

The great mistake made by many Christians with regard to prayer is that they only bring what they consider important matters to God, and attempt to manage smaller concerns themselves. This is really unbelief and self-confidence; for it is doubting His interest in us, and forgetting that word which says, "Without Me ye can do nothing." If we do not bring our little concerns to God, we attempt to bear them ourselves, only to prove our own helplessness. Many a stumble has come about in this way. Note the "all" of 1 Pet. 5:7.

Christ for Our Circumstances

In the epistle to the Philippians, the practical condition of the soul is developed more fully than anywhere else; and this is not so much in doctrine as in action and experience. The Apostle lays bare his own motives as well as walk, and even Christ's also. Hence it is peculiarly in this epistle that we find displayed the exercise of individual Christian life. Here we have the power of the Spirit of God acting in the soul of the believer, enabling him to realize Christ in the heart and path here below. But what gave rise to this character of instruction? What circumstances brought it out?

The absence of the Apostle from the Philippians and from his ordinary ministry while he was imprisoned at Rome. It was not, as at Corinth, that his absence brought out their ostentatious vanity and party spirit and worldly laxity and quarrellings. It led the Philippians to feel the necessity - living increasingly with and for and to Christ. There was nothing for it but each one looking and helping his brother to look to the Lord Himself. This being the effect produced, the Apostle was full of joy in thinking of them. He had been away several years, and externally in the most dismal circumstances himself, but his joy was not dimmed one whit. On the contrary, there is not another epistle so full of actually tasted happiness; and yet there was never an epistle written when all on earth seemed more clouded and filled with sorrow. So thoroughly is Christ the one circumstance that rules all others to the believer. When moving about and seeing both the devotedness of the saints, and sinners everywhere brought to God, one can understand the Apostle's continual joy and praise.

But think of him in prison for years, chained between two soldiers, debarred from the work that he loved, and others taking advantage of his absence to grieve him, preaching the very gospel out of contention and strife; and yet his heart was so running over with joy that he was filling others with it!

If there be a witness of the power of the Spirit of God working through human affections, through the heart of a saint on earth, in the midst of all weakness and trial, it is found here. It is not the picture of a man down under trying circumstances, for under them he never is, but of one consciously more than conqueror. Not that he never knew what it was to be cast down. He who wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians fully experienced all that which God in His grace made to be a kind of moral preparation for bringing out the comfort that was needed by the saints then and at all times.

Christ in the Path

We may have the power of the new name now, and the white stone. We shall have the reality of them in glory. If we are going on with the most delightful company of Christians, and not going on with God individually, we shall have a very poor time of it. If we make Christ our Friend personally, we shall have a very good time -of it down here with Him, in spite of men and circumstances. The only thing that makes any path bright is having Christ in it.

Christ Preached

"What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." Phil. 1:18.

It was in the fact that Christ was preached that Paul rejoiced, even though the motives that led some to preach Him were to be deeply censured. Alas! that any should preach Him of envy and strife. Yet it was so. Such is the heart of man. But Paul did and would rejoice that Christ was preached. The reasons that disposed some to preach Him might be and were unworthy. Paul could have no fellowship with such; but nevertheless Christ was preached, and that was a matter of continual rejoicing to the beloved Apostle.

Christian Experience: Christ Our Life

The epistle to the Philippians is the epistle of Christian experience, for therein is presented in a very touching way the experience of a believer that lives the Christian life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Though written by the Apostle Paul, he does not speak of his apostleship, nor does he address the Philippian assembly as an apostle, but as a servant of Jesus Christ. Nor does he speak of gifts and powers that alone belong to an apostle, but rather of experiences that are possible for every Christian. Thus, as we read the epistle, each one can say, This is the experience that is possible for me to enjoy if I live the Christian life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, the blessed experiences brought before us are entirely independent of circumstances, be they bright or sad. When the Apostle wrote the epistle, his circumstances were sorrowful and heartbreaking. He himself had been a prisoner four years. He knew that within the Christian circle there were some who were taking up the service of the Lord, and preaching Christ, even of envy and strife, supposing to add to his afflictions (chap. 1:15, 16); outside the Christian circle there were adversaries plotting for his life (chap. 1:28). Such was the state of the Christian profession, that he has to say, "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Chap. 2:21. And the walk of many was so low that, instead of being witnesses to Christ and His work, they had become "enemies of the cross of Christ."

Such were the circumstances: Paul a prisoner; inside the Christian circle, envy, strife, and contention; all seeking their own, and many walking as enemies of the cross; outside the Christian circle, adversaries, dogs, and evil workers.

Nevertheless, in the midst of these distressing circumstances the Apostle enjoys the most blessed Christian experience.

He has deep and continual joy in the Lord, and in everything that is of the Lord in the saints (chap. 3:1, 3; 4:10).

His confidence is unshaken in the Lord. He boasts in Christ Jesus and has no confidence in the flesh (chap. 1:6; 3:3; 4:13).

He is kept in a peace that passes all understanding (chap. 4:7).

His love flows out to the saints and appreciates their love to him (chap. 1:8; 4:1; 1:17).

His hope is undimmed as he looks for the Lord Jesus to come from heaven (chap. 3:20).

His faith trusts the Lord in whatsoever state he may be found (chap. 4:12, 13).

What then is the secret of such blessed experiences in the midst of such distressing circumstances? In one word it is CHRIST. All the experiences that pass before us in the epistle are the result of a believer having Christ before the soul.

The Apostle sees clearly that Christ is in the presence of God to represent believers, and that believers are left here for a time to represent Christ. He sees that Christ is our righteousness before God, and the prize at the end of the journey, and he has only Christ before him every step of the way. For him it was Christ, "whether it be by life, or by death." Having Christ before him he enjoyed all the blessed experiences of which he speaks in the epistle, and in order that we may enjoy these experiences he sets Christ before us. First, CHRIST our life (chap. 1:20, 21). Second, CHRIST our Pattern (chap. 2:5). Third, CHRIST in glory our Object (chap. 3:13, 14). Fourth, CHRIST our Hope (chap. 3:20, 21). Fifth, CHRIST our Strength (chap. 4:13).

1 - CHRIST OUR LIFE

In all truth Paul could say, "For me to live is Christ." Christ was all in his life. If he lived, it was by Christ and for Christ. If death was his portion, he would die for Christ. Over such a Christian, adversaries had no power, Satan no point of attack, and death no terror. The malice of envious brethren could not move him, and the low walk of those who were minding earthly things only drew forth his tears. Self being gone as a motive, insults and desertions called forth no bitterness and rancor; circumstances, however trying, drew forth no complaint. His one object was not to defend or exalt himself, or to decry and belittle others, but, in all circumstances, whether in life or death, to magnify Christ.

Christian Experience: Pattern, Object, Hope, Strength

In the second chapter of the epistle, Christ is look at, not as going up to glory, but as coming down to the cross; and we see the lowly mind that marked Him in every step that led to the cross. Thus Christ, in all the lowly grace of His path from the glory to the cross, is presented as our perfect pattern to produce in us a life of lowly grace.

The flesh in us is vainglorious, and the effort to exalt self often leads to the belittling of others. This vanity ever leads to strife. So we read of the disciples, "there was a strife among them," because they each wanted to be accounted the greatest (Luke 22:24). And how often, since that day, the root of strife among the people of God has been that someone wanted to be great. But, says the Apostle, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." We may think this difficult at times, for as one has said, "We may see great vanity or pride in another, and one may be going on really better than this or that person"; but if close to Christ, however comparatively well we may be walking, we shall feel in His presence our own nothingness, and see our brother in Christ, and all that is of Christ in him, rather than his faults. Then it will not be difficult for each to esteem other better than themselves.

The Apostle then would have us to be of one mind (v. 2); the one mind that he desires us to have is the lowly mind (v. 3); and the lowly mind has been perfectly set forth in Christ (v. 5). The mind of Christ would deliver us from all the self-importance of the flesh, and lead each to esteem himself the least of all.

We need the mind of Christ if we are to exhibit the lowly grace of Christ. It is possible to affect a lowly manner, and use humble words before men; but if the grace of Christ is to be seen in us, we shall need the lowly mind that was in Christ. Thus the Apostle turns our eyes upon Christ. Devoted saints may help us by their lives, their ministry, and their means; but only Christ can be the perfect pattern for the Christian's walk.

In all His perfect path He was the exact contrast to all that the flesh is. He made Himself of no reputation; the flesh in us would seek to make a reputation for itself, if not in the world, in the religious circle. He took upon Him the form of a servant, but the flesh in us likes to be served; the flesh in us likes to exalt itself. He was obedient to the will of another; we like to do our own wills.

In Christ we see the perfect love that made itself nothing in order to serve others. Love delights to serve; self likes to be served, and thinks itself exalted when others are waiting upon it. Walking in the spirit of Christ, vainglory would be gone, and the lowly grace of Christ would be expressed.

"Win lowliness of heart, and having won beware; And that thou grow not proud of lowliness, have care."

3 - CHRIST OUR OBJECT

If the second chapter has brought Christ before us in His lowly path as the pattern for our walk, the third chapter presents Christ in glory as the One to whom we are pressing on. God sets before us

Christ in glory as the perfect Object of our souls, and tells us that we are called on high to be with Him and like Him. With this bright prospect before us, we can forget the things that are behind, rise above the sorrows of the present, and reach forth to those things that are before.

In the light of the eternal glory that lies before us, present things lose their value, and the sorrows by the way are seen to be but for a moment. Compared with the coming glory, the things which are gain in the flesh are counted by the Apostle not only as valueless, but as dung. Having seen their worthlessness, he not only leaves them behind, but he forgets them; He says, as it were, "They are not worth talking about, even to condemn; I forget them" (v. 13).

Christ had laid hold of Paul for the express purpose of having the Apostle like Him and with Him in the glory; and Paul says, The one thing I desire is to lay hold of Christ in glory-the prize that awaits me at the end of the journey.

Blessed for all believers to know, young and old, that if we have not yet laid hold of Christ in the glory, Christ has laid hold of us, and He which hath begun a good work will perform it unto the end. No matter how rough the road, how many the trials, how deep the sorrows, how powerful the enemy, Christ will not let us go. He is "able even to subdue all things unto Himself," so will at last have us like Him and with Him in the glory.

"And is it so! we shall be like Thy Son,

Is this the grace which He for us has won? Father of glory, thought beyond all thought, In glory, to His own blest likeness brought."

4 - CHRIST OUR HOPE

The Apostle looks up to heaven and sees Christ in the glory, and realizes that believers are going to be conformed to the image of His Son in glory. It is possible to walk as He walked and in this sense to be morally like Christ even now; but, to be conformed to His image, we must wait for the coming glory. We are still in these bodies of humiliation, subject to sickness, and want, and exposed to dangers and death.

How then are we to be delivered from these bodies of humiliation? We look at Christ in heaven and we see we are going to be like Him; our conversation-the home of our affections- is in heaven, and to heaven we look for the change of these bodies. "From which also," writes the Apostle, "we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory." J.N.D. Trans.

Once He came as Savior to deliver us from our sins, and judgment, by His death on the cross. A second time He is coming as Savior to deliver us from these bodies of humiliation.

One thing remains to effect this great change- the coming of Christ. Christ is our hope, and at His coming, what we have looked forward to in hope will be accomplished in glory. In the twinkling of an eye we shall be like Christ and with Christ.

"One moment here, the next with Thee in bliss; Oh, what a glorious prospect, Lord, is this! Changed in a moment, from the flesh set free, Caught up together with Thyself to be."

5 - CHRIST OUR STRENGTH

It is blessed to look back and see the grace of Christ in His lowly life. It is blessed to look up and see Christ in the glory as the one glorious Object before our souls. It is blessed to look on and see that Christ is coming to conform us to His image. Nevertheless, as we look around we are faced with the circumstances by the way-prosperous circumstances that may make us careless and self-satisfied, or trying circumstances by which we may be cast down and dissatisfied. How then can we be lifted above our circumstances, be they bright or sad?

To answer this question, the Apostle gives us his own experience. He had known what it was to be in want as well as in prosperity; he had been full, and he had hungered; he had enjoyed plenty and he had suffered need. But in all circumstances he had found his support in Christ. So he could write, "I have strength for all things in Him that gives me power" (v. 13 J.N.D. Trans.).

In circumstances of weakness the Lord had said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Therefore, Paul had learned in whatsoever state he was to be content.

That Christ was his strength, was not merely an absolute truth to which he assented, but a truth that he had learned by experience. Through the strength of Christ he was made superior to all circumstances, be they bright or sad.

We may say Christ can do this for all saints, and it is true. But Paul says, as it were, He has done it for me, for I have learned by experience that I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

Thus, with Christ before his soul as his life, his pattern, his object, his hope, and his strength, the Apostle entered into all the blessed experiences that are proper to a Christian in the power of the Holy Spirit, and this in spite of so much in his circumstances that was sorrowful and heartbreaking.

Seeing that Christ remains, and that Christ is the same (Heb. 1:11, 12), it is still possible, amid the gathering gloom of these closing days, for the simplest believer to enjoy this same true Christian experience-this joy in the Lord, confidence in the Lord, peace in the midst of trials, love that flows out to the saints, hope that looks for the coming of Christ, and faith that counts upon His support to lift us above every trial by the way.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,

Look full in His wonderful face;

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace." H.S.

Christian Obedience

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

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

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

Christian Position, Service, Worship

John 11

The memories of Bethany cannot fail to touch a chord in the heart of everyone who loves the Lord Jesus. We naturally find pleasure in lingering over any spot that was dear to one we love-how much more when that One is the Lord Jesus Christ, the One to whom we owe everything. We love to think of anything associated with His blessed name; but what makes Bethany particularly interesting is that He seemed to find in the society of that little company a resting place in His toilsome path. How sweet to think that He who "endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself," such hatred and antagonism from man, had one little spot where He could find those who, although they knew but little, were truly attached to Himself.

The result of such intercourse is seen in the confidence of love which that message of Martha and Mary reveals: "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." They knew He loved their brother as well as they, and it is not their love but His love that is uppermost in their minds. It is to this spot that Jesus turns on His last journey to Jerusalem. "There they made Him a supper." There is no formal invitation, as with Simon the Pharisee; none was needed, for there was the ease, and as we have said, the confidence of known love. What a supper it was! Who was there? The Son of God-"God... manifest in flesh." Who was around Him? A company of poor sinners, attracted by perfect grace, and for whom He-the Son of man-was soon to lay down His life.

There is significance in the way the Bethany family is introduced. Jesus came to Bethany, "where Lazarus was which had been dead."

"Martha served," and Mary took "a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair." In this we have an illustration of Christian position, service and worship.

Lazarus had been dead, but now alive from the dead, he is seated in company with Jesus; so with the believer. He is alive from the dead, and that in the power of an endless life. We cannot be too clear as to this. Weakness and a troubled conscience is the result of imperfectly apprehending it. If we look to ourselves, we find failure to the very end; if we look to God's side, we find nothing but perfection. Christ is our life. The Father "hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Col. 1:12, 13. "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Eph. 2:6. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God." 2 Cor. 5:17, 18.

Such is the character of our standing. We shall not be more meet for heaven when we get there than we are now, nor will our heaven be more secure. The title is perfect. True, if I look at myself, I see nothing of all this; but I am not called upon to look at myself, but to judge myself. That is what God has done with nature-"condemned sin in the flesh"-and I am to reckon myself dead to sin and

alive unto God. True self-judgment, however, we must remember, proceeds from being in the presence of the Lord. The light exposes self in its true colors, and puts an end to all thought of improvement. We get the principle in Job's case. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself." But the same light that exposes self, manifests the unalterable grace in which we stand; and the desires of the new nature being strengthened, we get power to keep the old in check. We leave it behind in all its badness, and, going on in the power of the new nature, its energies are displayed. That is the principle of overcoming, as we read in Gal. 5:16-"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

A word as to Martha. It is the Lord's presence that calls forth her service. She does not lose the opportunity of ministering to Him. In this we learn a lesson. We ought not to seek to get through this world as comfortably as possible because our consciences are set at rest. It is not in keeping with the activities of divine love to feast on our own blessings in the midst of a groaning creation. Where these are in proper exercise, the saint is a channel of blessing to all around. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:38. O how our selfish hearts are exposed when we think of the pathway of the Lord Jesus on earth, or even of the unceasing care and bowels of compassion that animated such a one as Paul. But it is important to note that Martha's service is connected with the Lord. It must ever be so, where there is true service. We are always apt to imitate others, or work for the sake of a place or a name. But this will never do. The Lord has work for each one of us-for each his own work-and the test of its being rightly done is whether it has been done as for Him. Of course, in order to know what the Lord has for me to do, and to have Him as the object in doing it, there must be the broken will and the single eye.

Mary figures prominently in this scene. The appropriateness of her action is apparent from verse 7-"Against the day of My burying hath she kept this." Jesus was soon to leave them. "Me ye have not always." In view of this approaching death Mary esteems nothing too costly to spend, and pours out the precious ointment which she had kept for this purpose, as the answer of a loving heart to the love of His. It is the spirit of worship. In the eyes of man it was waste, and occasioned grumbling. But who can estimate its value in the sight of God? Man valued the Son of God at thirty pieces of silver. To faith He is the most glorious object that mortal eyes could behold. Set down with purged consciences in the sight of God, within the holiest, our eyes behold that worthy One who, by His shameful cross, has brought us there. What else can we do but worship, and what is more delightful than the sweet odor of a heart doing homage to that glorious One in whom all fullness dwells, and in whom the Father finds infinite delight?

A practical word on the thought with which we started. It is sweet to think that there was one spot on earth where Jesus could meet loving hearts. But have you ever thought that He seeks the same still? We sometimes sing,

"Who find in Abba's favor Our spirit's present home." and this is blessedly true. But there is another side-"If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." John 14:23.

May it be ours to have His love so filling our hearts, and every word of His so attended to, that He may find a dwelling place in us and with us here!

The Cleansing of the Leper

Lev. 14:10-20

In this passage we find the ceremony according to the law for the cleansing of the leper, which is a figure of the cleansing which Christ has accomplished for the believer; for leprosy is a type of sin. There is a distinction to be made between the purification of the leper and that of the priest.

There were but three sprinklings of persons with blood in the Old Testament—the sprinkling of the leper, that of the people, and that of the priest. They each took place once, and were not repeated (Exod. 24:8; Lev. 8:30).

No individual could do anything for the healing of the leper; it was the work of God.

In order to prove that the disease was leprosy, the leper was kept by himself, set apart, and watched, and observed every seven days. When he was entirely white, or when the spot had become white, he was purified. (Compare Psalm 32:3-5.)

When sin is hidden (the leprosy internal) the evil is greater, but the manifestation and confession of sin leads to peace, and the heart is set at ease. This is the upright and honest heart.

The symptoms of leprosy are described in Lev. 13. The healing came from God; the priest could only ascertain the disease, and perform the acts for purification. Leprosy excluded its victim from camp, as sin hinders communion between God and His people.

After his cleansing, the leper was re-instated in communion with the children of Israel; but the first effect of the knowledge of sin is to take from us the desire for communion with God, and the seeking after it.

As to the means used for the cleansing of lepers, they are The birds, one dead, which is a type of the death of Christ. It was killed over a vessel of running water. The living bird set free is a type of Christ's resurrection (Lev. 14:4-7). Our sins brought Jesus to the tomb, but He rose out of it; the work was finished; He had accomplished all.

The leper was to be washed with water (vv. 8, 9). Jesus cleanses us by the word which He has spoken to us. His word does for our souls today what the cleansing with water did for the body then. (See Eph. 5:25-27.) This cleansing was done once for all. Sanctification is once for all, but the Christian must grow in it. All believers are justified in Christ. This is an accomplished reality; the Holy Spirit puts us in this position.

There is the sanctification by God the Father, that of Jesus by His blood, and that of the Holy Spirit who gives efficacy to the Father's will and the work of the Son (John 17:17; Heb. 13:12; 1 Pet. 1:2). The Holy Spirit accomplishes it in individuals. He communicates life to us by the Word, and sanctifies us wholly.

3) After cleansing follows the knowledge of what has been done. The leper must understand it and receive its efficacy in his heart (vv. 10-20). The leper is presented to God with a sacrifice for his offense. He was anointed with blood as a sign of sanctification. The Christian is never to allow anything to enter his ear which would be inconsistent with the blood of the Lamb.

The right hand is the symbol of action. The Christian should not do anything which would be dishonoring to the blood of Christ. All that he does every day should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, and he must not act in any way which would not accord with the measure of God's thoughts in the death of Jesus. All in our actions which is not holy as the blood of Christ, is sin.

Blood on the great toe is a figure of holiness in our walk. We are not to be negative beings; Christ's life should always act in us. Our thoughts, actions, walk, all are under the blood of Christ, and that blood is the measure of what our holiness should be. One is either under the shelter of the blood of Christ, or outside it. The child of God has on him that blood which can neither be effaced nor lose its value. There is never need of another sprinkling. Every day our souls are renewed inwardly by the Holy Spirit as we confess our sins before our Father.

4) Blood was not the only thing necessary; oil was required. The oil, a type of the Holy Spirit, is given because the blood is there. It was not after the water, but after the blood, that oil was applied.

The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us because the blood of Christ is on us. If we are as pure in the sight of God as that blood, why, indeed, should not the Spirit be in us? The blood of Christ has exhausted the wrath of God against us. There is nothing but love for those who are sprinkled with that blood.

The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of knowledge, joy, peace and love; these are His first fruits. He is also a Spirit of strength and power, able to overcome the obstacles which arise in our path.

The effect of all was to re-establish the leper in communion with God.

To Cover Sins

Whether it be in saint or sinner, it is wickedness and folly to cover sins. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper." Pro. 28:13. How is it possible to truly cover them, seeing that "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do"? And "Who can forgive sins but God only?" God only can cover because against Him and Him only have we sinned and done evil in His sight. Hence the preciousness of that word from God, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." Rom. 4:7. How forcibly it speaks as to WHO is the coverer! even He who can say of everyone that believes in Jesus, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." And again, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." What a Coverer-the blessed God! What a covering-the precious blood of Christ!

Creation and Salvation

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." Heb. 11:3.

God could call worlds into existence by the word of His mouth, but when sinners had to be cleansed, something more was needed. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." When worlds were to be framed, God had but to speak; when sinners had to be saved, He had to give His Son.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:9, 10.

Dead and Buried

"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" Col. 2:20.

"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." Col. 2:12.

Many Christians like to dwell on being dead but do not understand being buried; that is, put out of sight and done with. On the contrary, they like to keep "their being dead" in sight, and to exalt themselves for having counted themselves dead. We are not only dead but buried, thank God, and entitled thus to be occupied no longer with our wretched selves but with Christ.

Difference Between Grace and Mercy

Mercy and grace, though they may touch one another at certain points, are not the same thing, and therefore could not be used interchangeably as if they were words of equal value.

Grace simply means free gift, or free favor, and it does not necessarily raise any question as to the character of the individual to whom the gift is given, or the favor shown. It excludes every idea of remuneration and of legal claim on the part of the recipient; otherwise, grace would be no more grace. (Rom. 11:6.)

When, however, we speak of mercy shown to any, we imply actual demerit in the person to whom mercy is extended. Both the one who shows mercy and the one who receives it are conscious that another kind of treatment altogether might have been justly measured out.

Now in our soul's blessing, both of these golden words have place. We are said to be justified freely by God's grace, for it is certain that we never worked for it, nor can we in anywise remunerate God for so astonishing an act of favor. By grace also we are saved. Salvation is a free gift; it is too great, too grand, too priceless, too far beyond all human reach ever to visit us any other way. It is equally true that "according to His mercy He saved us." For we who are saved were once dead in trespasses and sins, the willing servants of sin and Satan, and were by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2). Mercy alone could meet our case and, blessed be God, He is rich in it. So we sing-

"How shall I meet His eyes?

Mine on Himself I cast,

And own myself the Savior's prize;

Mercy from first to last."

The Power of the Name of Jesus

There was a notorious thief in the south parts of Scotland, about two hundred years ago, called "John of the Score," who for many years had followed that wicked trade. At length he met with a poor man traveling with two horses, which Score took from him. The poor countryman, falling upon his knees, earnestly begged that for Jesus Christ's sake he would give him the one again; for he had no more to maintain his poor family with but what he could get by their labor. But all was in vain, for the thief carried both away to his own home, leaving the poor man in a very desolate condition.

However, not long after, Score became very unhappy and melancholy. He could get no rest nor quiet, yet he knew not the cause, only he professed that the words which the poor man spoke (though he was so great an atheist that he understood not what he meant when he spoke of Christ,) lay like a great weight upon his spirit.

When he was sought after for his robberies, he bade his sons to shift out of the way; but for himself he could not fly, there being a restraint upon him, and something within him that bound him from going out of the way. He stayed in his house till he was apprehended, and brought up to Edinburgh, and there put in prison.

While he was there a godly preacher, Mr. Henry Blith, and a Christian gentleman, William Cunningham, tutor of Boniton, who had known him, paid him a visit. They brought before him his miserable estate, and the danger that his soul was in (for he was condemned by the law to die), pressing upon him the necessity of flying to Jesus Christ. Whereupon he suddenly cried out, "Oh, what word is that? for it has been my death: that's the word that has lain upon my heart, ever since the poor man spoke it to me, so that from that time I had no power to shift out of the way." Afterward, being told who Jesus Christ was, without whom he could not be saved, he cried, "Oh, will He ever look at me, and show me mercy, who for His sake would not show mercy to that poor man, and give him back his horse?" Yet, after further instruction, a real and glorious change appeared in him, and he gave most convincing evidences of the reality of salvation. He attained to great assurance before his death, and upon the scaffold, in the public street, where he was executed, spoke so wonderfully of the Lord's dealing with him, and that with such knowledge and judgment, as left a conviction upon all present that he had been truly saved by the grace of God.

Discipline

Discipline, the discipline of a child, is healthful and does good like a medicine. If we need it, it is the only thing for us. When, in the days of Samuel, Israel asked for a king, would it have been well for them if the Lord had given them David? The Lord had David in reserve for them; but would it have been seasonable, would it have been healthful for them if David had been given to them at once, when with a rebellious will they were asking for a king? Surely, they must first be made to know the bitterness of their own way. A Saul must be given when Israel asks a king. This was discipline, and this was the only thing that would have been healthful for them. But when they have tasted the bitterness of their own way, in pity of their misery, the Lord will bring out that which He has in reserve for them, the man after His own heart, that shall fulfill all His pleasure.

How perfect was all this! Had David been given to Israel in the day of 1 Sam. 11, the whole moral of the story would have been lost to us. But the love is the same, whether it be discipline or consolation, medicine or food.

Discontent and Its Results

Gen. 19

The Lord has no sympathy with a worldly mind; and such a mind it was that had led Lot to settle down amid the defilement of guilty Sodom. Faith never put him there; a spiritual mind never put him there; "his righteous soul" never put him there; it was simple love for this present evil world that led him first to choose, then to pitch "his tent toward," and finally to sit "in the gate of Sodom." And oh! what a portion he chose! Truly, it was a broken cistern which could hold no water—a broken reed which pierced his hand. It is a bitter thing to seek in any wise to manage for ourselves; we are sure to make the most grievous mistakes. It is infinitely better to allow God to order all our ways for us—to commit them all, in the spirit of a little child, to Him who is so willing and so able to manage for us—to put the pen, as it were, into His blessed hand, and allow Him to sketch out our entire course according to His own unerring wisdom and infinite love.

No doubt Lot thought he was doing well for himself and his family when he moved to Sodom, but the sequel shows how entirely he erred; and it also sounds in our ears a voice of deepest solemnity—a voice telling us to beware how we yield to the incipient workings of a worldly spirit. "Be content with such things as ye have." Why? Is it because you are so well off in the world?—because you have all your poor rambling hearts would seek after?—because there is not so much as a single chink in your circumstances through which a vain desire might make its escape? Is this to be the ground of our contentment? By no means. What then? "For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Blessed portion! Had Lot been content therewith, he never would have sought the well-watered plains of Sodom.

And then, if we need any further ground of inducement to the exercise of a contented spirit, truly we have it in this chapter. What did Lot gain in the way of happiness and contentment? Little indeed. The people of Sodom surround his house and threaten to break into it; he seeks to appease them by a most humiliating proposition, but all in vain. If a man will mingle with the world for the purpose of self-aggrandizement, he must make up his mind to endure the sad consequences. We cannot profit by the world and at the same time bear effectual testimony against its wickedness. "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge." This will never do. The true way to judge is to stand apart in the moral power of grace, not in the supercilious spirit of pharasaism. To attempt to reprove the world's ways while we profit by association with it is vanity; the world will attach very little weight to such reproof and such testimony. Thus it was, too, with Lot's testimony to his sons-in-law; "He seemed as one that mocked." It is in vain to speak of approaching judgment while finding our place, our portion, and our enjoyment in the very scene which is to be judged.

Dying Alone

I was asked one day to go and see a poor old woman who had for many years lived quite alone. "And now," said her neighbor, "she is dying alone, and I have my children to mind, and can only see her once a day."

Circumstances prevented my going just at once to see her, but those two words, "dying alone," rang in my ears and seemed to haunt me from day to day. To live alone appeared to me sad enough, but to die alone seemed the very depth of human misery. I was young, but had known sorrow, and had stood by several deathbeds. I had watched the last breath flicker out by the bedside of both rich and poor, but none of them had died alone. My own friends were surrounded by every luxury and comfort; everything that love could plan to make the sick-room cheerful and smooth the dying pillow was done by cheerful hands; and many cherished ones softly glided in and out with words of comfort and sympathy. I had stood, too, by the dying beds of the poor, and had watched with admiration how every nerve had been strained to provide comforts for the sick one out of the hard-earned wages; and kind neighbors were ever ready to come in and share the weary night-watch. But now a new phase of suffering presented itself-one I had not heard of before. And I oft repeated those dismal words, "dying alone!" Death on the battlefield amidst the dying and slain, or death in the crowded wards of a hospital, seemed comfort to me compared to this, and I even prayed, "Lord, may I never die alone."

Nearly a week after this I found myself on the way to see the poor creature I did not even know by name, but whose circumstances called for my deepest sympathy-"dying alone!" It was a very low door by which I entered a very small dark room; the window, but one pane of glass, scarcely giving sufficient light to show distinctly the few objects in that chamber; and it was with a feeling akin to awe I went up to the low bed in the corner and gazed upon that aged woman dying alone! It was a calm and pleasant face, though much furrowed and wrinkled by care and years; her silvery hair was parted upon her brow, and her white cap and sheets showed no signs of neglect; yet she was dying alone!

"Sit down, Miss," she said with a kindly smile; my neighbors told me you would come some day, but I thought likely I would be gone home before you came; but now I hope you have brought me some good word about the Lord."

"I have His Word in my pocket," I said.

"Ah! that's well; His own Word is better than anything we can say. Read for me please."

As I turned from passage to passage of the blessed Book, her aged eyes beamed, and her whole soul seemed to drink in the precious words; and as I prayed with her before leaving, she joined with me in every petition. As I parted from her, I expressed my surprise that she could be so full of peace and joy when dying alone.

"Christ is with me," she said, "and when you have known Him as long as I have known Him, and proved His love as long, you will not wonder. I've known Him more than twenty years, and I've lived much of that time alone with Him; and now I've been dying these six months past, alone with Him, for few come to see me, and there's few I care to see, for I've Christ always with me, and there's no solitude in that."

I came away from that humble dwelling with very different thoughts from those with which I had entered it. God had a new lesson for me through His aged saint. Her calm face and joyful answer, "Christ is with me," opened up to me depths in Him hitherto unknown; for though I knew Him as my Savior and Friend, He was not as yet everything to me. I saw this aged servant of Christ many times after this, and learned from her what I believe I have never forgotten. One day she told me that she had asked the Lord, if it were His will, that someone might be with her when she breathed her last.

"Why?" I asked, thinking she was dreading to die alone.

"Because, if no one saw me die, they would not know I was as happy to die as to live; for Christ is with me now, and shall be with me then, and I shall be with Him forever."

Each day, as I left her, I saw she was passing quickly to her desired haven. She had few earthly comforts save those the Lord privileged me to take her; yet she was full of joy and thankfulness and unclouded peace.

One day I knocked as usual at the door, but got no answer. "Oh," I said, "has she died alone?" With breathless anxiety I opened the door; her hands were clasped, her lips moved in prayer. I stood in silence till her eyes opened and she saw me.

"You've come to see me die," she said. "Sit down. If it was not for others, I would rather be alone with Christ, but you'll stay till the end."

Then in thoughtfulness for me she said, "Oh, but you are young, and you may not like to see anyone die."

"Yes," I said, "I should like to be with you." Pointing to her well-worn Bible she said, "Read once more the last verses of Rom. 8"

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

As I closed the Book, I was about to ask her if I should pray. I observed a slight movement of the eyelids, she gazed upwards, a radiant smile lit up her features, and her happy spirit was with the Lord. I knelt and closed her eyes, drew the sheet over the pale face of death, came out, locked the door, and having made a few arrangements with her neighbor as to her remains, I returned home.

The lessons learned in that little room were precious to me. Dear reader, have you learned anything from reading this simple account of one who was truly satisfied with Christ? Can you say, "This is the Christ I have got. He is everything to me, if called to live alone; everything to me if called to die alone. A Christ who is above, and beyond, and over every earthly circumstance-a

Christ who thoroughly satisfies my heart?"

Ephesians 1

If our hearts have been opened to take in the Holy Spirit's teaching concerning the counsels of God, we have been lifted out of this scene entirely, for according to those counsels we are blessed in another sphere. Concerning the truth revealed in the Ephesians, one has said, "I cannot suppose too much and too great blessings when I see them flowing from God Himself. If from ourselves, what could you or I expect? I should be ashamed to think of anything I can have if I bring myself in; but if I bring Christ in, then I can see there is nothing too great for God to give me."

An Old Word of Exhortation

Yet another year has rolled away, and we know not if we shall see another, or even a part of another; for "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." One of the greatest proofs being, alas! (though with much to praise and thank our gracious God for) the general low, lukewarm state of things among us, lukewarmness to Christ Himself, manifested in so many ways. And chiefly, I think I may say, in the fact that (with exceptions that bring glory to God) most "seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." That is, He has not His proper place in our hearts-our own things being in His place. So, though not wrong things in themselves, perhaps, yet the heart unduly occupied with them, even if right, and a duty to attend to them, the Lord Jesus as the Object to live for and serve, is lost. His presence is slipped away from, and the soul is at a distance from Him. Spiritual discernment is dimmed and spiritual power is almost gone. There is little or no caring for the things of Jesus Christ, as there once was, even if the outward walk be right, which it too often now is not, through covetousness getting into the heart.

Suffer me then, dear brethren, to urge upon you, and myself too, the truth that we are "not our own," but "bought with a price." And what a price! He gave Himself for us. Himself! That we are not left down here merely to live decent, moral, and respectable lives, and attend to our business and families, and try to get on in the world till the Lord comes. But to live unto Him in our families and businesses, as witnesses for Him, and in some little way to serve each other and souls around us, presenting our bodies a living sacrifice unto God; that is, an all day, every-day sacrifice unto Him, which is our reasonable service; and "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds."

And what a happy thing this is! How we prove "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," when heartily and really yielding ourselves up to Him as those that are alive from the dead. How self is practically gone too when content with earning an honest living and giving up ourselves to God and for others, we thus "walk in love." (Eph. 5.) What a sweet savor to God! If you ask me for the secret spring (and I believe the only way to be able thus to be devoted in heart to Him), how thus to have Christ as the Object for our hearts, as He ought to be, it is in seeing that we are an object to His heart-in seeing that His heart is always thinking of and caring for us, that we are His treasure, that treasure hid in a field, in order to possess which He sold all that He had and bought the field. As one has said, "It is as true of Him, as it is of us, that where His treasure is, there His heart is also." Yes, dear children of God, He is always thinking of, sympathizing with, watching over, caring for and loving us. Oh, to take it in more! Let us dwell upon this, meditate upon it. Ask God to enable our poor, dull hearts to take in Christ's great, and wonderful, and unceasing, unchanging love to us, as really His treasure, and really dear to Him, and we shall find Him becoming an object to our hearts. This is what draws our spiritual affection toward Him to whom we owe so much; yes, to whom we owe everything, and to whom we belong. He will then become our treasure; and where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. If there is one thing we fail in more than another (the root failure, I think), it is in not really believing how much He loves us, or in forgetting it; and then come all kinds of other failures out of this one. Let us judge

ourselves for this, dear brethren, praying that prayer in Eph. 3 which ends in asking that we may know the love of Christ toward us, which passes knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

A word or two more, my brethren. Do we pray for laborers, and for those who edit periodicals? And when you hear, or read, do you go to the Scriptures that are referred to and see "whether these things were so"? Oh! do not let anything take you from the written Word of God. If you have little time for reading, and you find yourself reading periodicals, and not your Bible, rather read your Bible. And always read the Word with the periodicals. Honor God's Word first. I am more and more persuaded of the importance of searching God's own pure Word for oneself, though thankful for and not despising any written ministry, for that would be very wrong and displeasing to God who gives it. And let me urge on you, too, to read prayerfully and with the sincere desire to do God's will. And if in periodicals or reading the Word by itself, or other ministry, we get any light or help or stirring up, or have things brought to remembrance, let us pray God to enable us to live out what we get from Him thus, that He may be glorified, and our own souls really and truly blest during the "little while" that we may still be left in this scene. J.B. Dunlop

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."
Psalm 34:13

Explanations

To be taken up with the Spirit's guidance apart from the authority of the Written Word, may lead to the wildest fanaticism, of which there have been painful examples.

To be taken up with the Word apart from the Spirit's teaching, is rationalism, for it is founded on the false assumption of man's competency to reason about God's truth, instead of being judged by it.

To refuse the authority of the Word because we cannot understand it, is infidelity. To look to any persons or ordinances to come between us and God, besides the accomplished work of His beloved Son, is ritualism.

Faith

Faith is, at once, the power of ministry, the power of testimony, and the power of worship. If we are not living "by the faith of the Son of God," who loved us, and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20), we shall neither be effectual servants, faithful witnesses, nor true worshipers.

Faith, Not Discussion

John 7

Of the three great feasts of the Jews (Deut. 16:16), in which year by year all the males had to go up to Jerusalem, two ["Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7); "When the day of Pentecost was fully come" (Acts 2:1).] have had their antitypes; the third has not.

The feast of tabernacles was celebrated after the harvest and the vintage. In it the children of Israel dwelt in booths, in witness that, once strangers, they were strangers no longer. But then there was in connection with this feast an eighth day, showing that along with the accomplishment of God's purposes in respect to the earth, there would be the introduction of a new period, the commencement of a new week.

Jesus was in Galilee (v. 1). "Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world." vv. 2-4. They wanted Him to give a manifestation of Himself adequate to His claims. This was not the time for Christ to show Himself to the world. He will do so, "Every eye shall see Him"; His glory shall be exhibited to the terror of the ungodly. But He is not showing Himself now to the world-and this, to a world lying in wickedness, is mercy, real longsuffering (2 Pet. 3:9). His brethren had no understanding of this, "for neither did His brethren believe on Him." v. 5.

Mark His answer: "My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for My time is not yet full come." When He is manifested in power, it will not be a question of testimony merely against evil; He will say, "Those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me." Luke 19:27. He takes no such place of vindicating Himself now. Cost what it will, we are to accomplish the will of God while evil is in power; there is no bringing in of power to hinder the evil (Mark 9:13; Rev. 3:10).

Having said this, "He abode still in Galilee"; He had gone there on His first rejection. And though we find Him going up to Jerusalem to keep the feasts, etc., He abode in Galilee. "The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." Matt. 4:15, 16. For judgment was He come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind. "Ye say, We see," He told the Pharisees, "therefore your sin remaineth" (chap. 9:41). He was "Jesus of Galilee." The poor despised Galileans had the light when the Jews of Jerusalem had not.

His brethren having gone up, He also goes up (v. 10), "not openly, but as it were in secret."

And now we find what is going on in hearts. There is much murmuring among the people concerning Him; some say, "He is a good man"; others, "Nay; but He deceiveth the people." The Lord might bring blessing out of it, but there are reasoning and discussing, and this is just the proof that they have nothing to do with it as yet.

In another place He asks His disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" They tell Him, "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." (See Matt. 16.) It was all discussion. But when Peter replies (to the question, "But whom say ye that I am?"), "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," He tells him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." There was personal recognition of Himself, and where there is that, there is no discussion. Discussing Him as subject matter in their own minds, they had not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. Where people's minds are at work discussing the right and the wrong, there is not the mind of the newborn babe; they are not receiving, but judging. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" asked Nathanael (Nazareth was a despised city, and he thought no good thing could come out of it); but when that which was blessed was presented to him, the Israelite without guile received it.

Further, we get instruction here (vv. 14-17) as to receiving the doctrine of God. About the middle of the feast Jesus goes up into the temple and teaches. The Jews marvel, saying, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" He tells them, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." They thought He had received it from man; therefore He says, It "is not Mine." No matter what we have learned, if we have not learned it from God, it is nothing; there is no faith; if we learned from man, it is mine. Then He adds, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." Where there is faith, there is the unfeigned desire to do the will of God. Observe, He says, "If any man will [that is, wills to] do," not, "If he have done." "If... thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light"; God will show what His will is. If it be not, what is the good (speaking with reverence) of knowing His will? there is not the intention of doing it. Where the heart is right in the sight of God, He gives the capacity for knowing His will. The heart ought to be, in a certain sense, wary; there is a Christian simplicity, and there is a simplicity not Christian; but there may be this wariness, and yet sincerity of desire to do God's will when known. This is ever the practical test of Christian truthfulness. There may be great ignorance and infirmity, but if the eye be single, if there be the real intention of the heart of doing God's will, he shall know, etc. Very often we do not get light because we are not prepared to walk in the light when known.

Faithfulness

Let us be faithful to an absent Lord. Let us live for Him who died for us. While our consciences repose in His blood, let our heart's affections entwine themselves around His Person, so that our separation from "this present evil world" may not be merely a matter of cold principle, but an affectionate separation, because the object of our affections is not here.

Fear Not

"What fathomless mercies, what infinite grace! With humble thanksgiving the road we retrace,
Thou never hast failed us, our Strength, and our

Stay,

To whom should we turn for the rest of the way?

"Through danger, through darkness, by day and by night,

Thou ever hast guarded and guided us right. In Thee we have trusted, and peacefully lay Our
hand in Thy hand for the rest of the way.

"Thy cross all our refuge, Thy blood all our plea, None other we want, Lord Jesus, but Thee.

We fear not the shadows at close of life's day, For Thou wilt go with us the rest of the way!"

Fellowship, Full Joy, and Cleansing

In 1 John 1, we see a wonderful application of the precious blood of Christ. It is the basis of removing all that interferes with communion with the Father and the Son. It is our Christian privilege to make much of the blood of Christ. God is satisfied with the work of the cross and the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse all sin and guilt. If awareness of sin in the walk rises to hinder our joy or fellowship, let us get into the presence of God and confess it.

Specific confession clears it all and frees our soul from the hindrance. A general sort of confession will not do, "he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing" (Lev. 5:5). When there is such openness before God, it is our blessed privilege to enjoy in a real way in our souls the sense of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. The accuser's voice is stilled. The joy is full, and so is the fellowship.

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7.

A Full Presentation of Christ

We have an excellent touchstone by which we try all sorts of teaching and preaching. The most spiritual teaching will ever be characterized by a full and constant presentation of Christ. The Spirit cannot dwell on aught but Jesus. Of Him He delights to speak. He delights in setting forth His attractions and excellencies. Hence, when a man is ministering by the power of the Spirit of God, there will always be more of Christ than anything else in his ministry. There will be little room in such ministry for human logic and reasoning. Such things may do very well when a man desires to set forth himself; but the Spirit's sole object- be it well remembered by all who minister-will ever be to set forth Christ.

Glorified

The golden chain of blessing found in Rom. 8:28-30 shall not be broken. As sure as the believer's destiny is marked out in the counsels of God, so sure is the day when the believer shall be "glorified." What is it to be glorified? Glory is the excellence of Christ imparted to His own and in eternity to be in full display. (See John 17:22.) Every believer in that coming day shall be conformed to the image of the Son of God. The displayed excellence of Christ shall be upon him. This will be his glory forever by unspeakable grace! May that glory show forth in us in some measure while we patiently wait for that day soon to break.

The God of Peace

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Heb. 13:20.

The title under which the Holy Spirit in this passage introduces God to our thoughts is peculiarly expressive. He calls Him, "The God of peace."

That is what He is to us in connection with the opening grave of the "great shepherd of the sheep," and on the foundation of "the blood of the everlasting covenant." In short, we have in this most comprehensive passage two Persons and two things. We have the God of peace, and the Lord Jesus; the blood of the everlasting covenant, and the resurrection from the dead. All these we have under the pen of the Holy Spirit.

But there is another title under which God must be seen before the soul can really enjoy Him as "The God of peace," and that is as the "God of judgment." To speak of peace while the claims of God in this latter character lie unanswered is the very height of presumptuous folly. God can have no peace with sin in any shape or form. If sin be not put away there can be no peace with God. There may be the peace of ignorance, the peace of carnal security, the peace of a hardened heart, the peace of a seared conscience; but there can be no peace with God so long as sin remains unjudged. Hence, therefore, it becomes us to inquire on what ground the inspired Apostle can speak of God as "The God of peace."

The ground is this—may the anxious reader understand it—the "God of judgment" met the Sin-bearer at the cross and settled it once and forever. The divine Substitute made peace by the cross in order that "The God of peace" might meet us without judgment at the opening grave. All that the God of judgment had against my sin, He laid on the head of my Substitute on the cross in order that I might know and enjoy Him as the God of peace.

This is the grand fundamental truth of the gospel which must, when simply believed, give settled peace for the conscience. The justice of God has been perfectly satisfied about sin by the death of Christ. And more, God has been glorified about sin by the death of Christ. Yes, dear reader, not only has God been perfectly satisfied, but eternally glorified in reference to sin by the blood of the cross. This must give peace to every one who simply believes it.

It is wonderful to think of the meager view we take of the gospel, notwithstanding its moral grandeur as it shines before us in the pages of the Book of God. From the way in which one sometimes hears the gospel put, it would seem as though forgiveness of sins, were the fruit of an exercise of mercy at the expense of justice, as though justice consented to stand aside while mercy pardons and saves..

How different it is from that stupendous scheme of redemption which had its origin in the bosom of God; which was laid in the eternal counsels of, the Trinity before the foundation of the world; which was ratified by the blood of the everlasting covenant; which. is revealed by the Holy Spirit in the

Scriptures of truth, and received by faith into the hearts of all those who through grace set to their seal that God is true (John 3:33). In that glorious scheme we behold mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, blessedly combined so that the sinner is as positively saved by righteousness and truth as by mercy and peace. The latter are not more favorable to Him than the former. Justice and judgment are the pillars of that blood-sprinkled throne of grace to which the saved sinner approaches in worship and adoration. The "God of judgment" met Christ on the cross, and there entered into and definitely settled the great question of sin.

How is this to be known? Is it by some feeling in my own mind? Is it by my passing through some mental process? Is it by aught that I can do or say or think or feel? No. How then? "The God of peace,... brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus." This is the way I am to know that the question of sin has been eternally settled. If it had not been settled, we should never have heard of "The God of peace," or seen the great Shepherd's opening grave, or known of the changeless efficacy of the blood of "the everlasting covenant."

The God of peace could never have appeared on the scene if all the claims of the God of judgment had not been divinely answered. How were they answered? By the blood of Jesus-nothing less-nothing more-nothing different. Nothing else could avail. If I had all the good works that were ever performed beneath the canopy of heaven; if I had all the morality, all the fleshly pietism, all the legal righteousness of which man ever could boast; if I had all the alms that ever were distributed by the hand of benevolence; if I had all these and ten thousand times ten thousand more besides placed to my credit, it would not answer the claims of the God of judgment with respect to my sins.

But the death of Christ has answered for me. That sacrifice stands before the eye of infinite holiness in all its solitary grandeur, in all its divine sufficiency. It needs no addition. It has met all. What more do I want as the ground of my peace? Nothing more. God is satisfied; so am I; the matter is settled forever, nor can anyone or anything ever unsettle it.

Reader are you satisfied? Is Christ sufficient for you? Has He done enough to meet the claims of your conscience? Do you want to add something of your own doings or feelings to His all-sufficient atonement? If not, what are you waiting for? You say, "I do not feel." I reply, "We are not saved by feeling, but by faith." "The just shall live," not by feeling, but "by faith." Do you not see that while you talk of not feeling, you are still on legal ground-on the ground of works? You have, it may be, abandoned the idea of manual labor, but you are still looking to your mental labor. The one is as worthless as the other. Give up both as a ground of salvation, and take Christ. This is what you need in order to be happy.

If you were to hear a person say, "I am happy now, I have peace with God because I have given a large sum to charity," would you not pronounce him self-deceived? Doubtless; and yet you say, "If I could feel, I should be happy." Where lies the difference between "do" and "feel"? Is not the one as stable a foundation for a sinner's peace as the other? Would it not be better to let Christ supplant both? Is there not enough in Him without your feelings as well as without your works? If your feeling or your works had been necessary, then why did "The God of peace" bring again from the dead our Lord Jesus? Is it not evident that you are seeking something more as a ground of peace than that which is presented to you in the gospel?

Dear friend, do think of this. My heart's desire is that you may rest now and evermore in a full Christ-that He may be sufficient for you as He is sufficient for God. Then feelings and works of the right kind will be forthcoming, not as a ground of peace, but as the fragrant fruit of an enjoyed salvation; not as a title to life, but as the outflow of a life possessed through faith in Christ.

It is interesting to observe the three titles applied to our Lord Jesus Christ as Shepherd. In John 10 He is called "The good shepherd" in death. In Heb. 13 He is called "That great shepherd" in resurrection. And in 1 Pet. 5 He is called "The chief shepherd" in glory. Each title has its own specific meaning, and its own appropriate place.

The God of Peace

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Heb. 13:20.

The title under which the Holy Spirit in this passage introduces God to our thoughts is peculiarly expressive. He calls Him, "The God of peace."

That is what He is to us in connection with the opening grave of the "great shepherd of the sheep," and on the foundation of "the blood of the everlasting covenant." In short, we have in this most comprehensive passage two Persons and two things. We have the God of peace, and the Lord Jesus; the blood of the everlasting covenant, and the resurrection from the dead. All these we have under the pen of the Holy Spirit.

But there is another title under which God must be seen before the soul can really enjoy Him as "The God of peace," and that is as the "God of judgment." To speak of peace while the claims of God in this latter character lie unanswered is the very heights of presumptuous folly. God can have no peace with sin in any shape or form. If sin be not put away, there can be no peace with God. There may be the peace of ignorance, the peace of carnal security, the peace of a hardened heart, the peace of a seared conscience; but there can be no peace with God so long as sin remains unjudged. Hence, therefore, it becomes us to inquire on what ground the inspired Apostle can speak of God as "The God of peace."

The ground is this-may the anxious reader understand it-the "God of judgment" met the Sin-bearer at the cross and there went into the entire question of sin and settled it once and forever. The divine Substitute made peace by the cross in order that "The God of peace" might meet us without judgment at the opening grave. All that the God of judgment had against my sin, He laid on the head of my Substitute on the cross in order that I might know and enjoy Him as the God of peace.

This is the grand fundamental truth of the gospel which must, when simply believed, give settled peace for the conscience. The justice of God has been perfectly satisfied about sin by the death of Christ. And more, God has been glorified about sin by the death of Christ. Yes, dear reader, not only has God been perfectly satisfied, but eternally glorified in reference to sin by the blood of the cross. This must give peace to every one who simply believes it.

It is wonderful to think of the meager view we take of the gospel, notwithstanding its moral grandeur as it shines before us in the pages of the Book of God. From the way in which one sometimes hears the gospel put, it would seem as though forgiveness of sins were the fruit of an exercise of mercy at the expense of justice, as though justice consented to stand aside while

mercy pardons and saves.

How different it is from that stupendous scheme of redemption which had its origin in the bosom of God; which was laid in the eternal counsels of the Trinity before the foundation of the world; which was ratified by the blood of the everlasting covenant; which is revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures of truth, and received by faith into the hearts of all those who through grace set to their seal that God is true (John 3:33). In that glorious scheme we behold mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, blessedly combined so that the sinner is as positively saved by righteousness and truth as by mercy and peace. The latter are not more favorable to Him than the former. Justice and judgment are the pillars of that blood-sprinkled throne of grace to which the saved sinner approaches in worship and adoration. The "God of judgment" met Christ on the cross, and there entered into and definitely settled the great question of sin.

How is this to be known? Is it by some feeling in my own mind? Is it by my passing through some mental process? Is it by aught that I can do or say or think or feel? No. How then? "The God of peace,... brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus." This is the way I am to know that the question of sin has been eternally settled. If it had not been settled we should never have heard of "The God of peace," or seen the great Shepherd's opening grave, or known of the changeless efficacy of the blood of "the everlasting covenant."

The God of peace could never have appeared on the scene if all the claims of the God of judgment had not been divinely answered. How were they answered? By the blood of Jesus-nothing less-nothing more-nothing different. Nothing else could avail. If I had all the good works that were ever performed beneath the canopy of heaven; if I had all the morality, all the fleshly pietism, all the legal righteousness of which man ever could boast; if I had all the alms that ever were distributed by the hand of benevolence; if I had all these and ten thousand times ten thousand more besides placed to my credit, it would not answer the claims of the God of judgment with respect to my sins.

But the death of Christ has answered for me. That sacrifice stands before the eye of infinite holiness in all its solitary grandeur, in all its divine sufficiency. It needs no addition. It has met all. What more do I want as the ground of my peace? Nothing more. God is satisfied; so am I; the matter is settled forever, nor can anyone or anything ever unsettle it.

Reader are you satisfied? Is Christ sufficient for you? Has He done enough to meet the claims of your conscience? Do you want to add something of your own doings or feelings to His all sufficient atonement? If not, what are you waiting for? You say, "I do not feel." I reply, "We are not saved by feeling, but by faith." "The just shall live," not by feeling, but "by faith." Do you not see that while you talk of not feeling, you are still on legal ground-on the ground of works? You have, it may be, abandoned the idea of manual labor, but you are still looking to your mental labor. The one is as worthless as the other. Give up both as a ground of salvation, and take Christ. This is what you need in order to be happy.

If you were to hear a person say, "I am happy now, I have peace with God because I have given a large sum to charity," would you not pronounce him self-deceived? Doubtless; and yet you say, "If I could feel, I should be happy." Where lies the difference between "do" and "feel"? Is not the one as stable a foundation for a sinner's peace as the other? Would it not be better to let Christ supplant both? Is there not enough in Him without your feelings as well as without your works? If

your feeling or your works had been necessary, then why did "The God of peace" bring again from the dead our Lord Jesus? Is it not evident that you are seeking something more as a ground of peace than that which is presented to you in the gospel?

Dear friend, do think of this. My heart's desire is that you may rest now and evermore in a full Christ-that He may be sufficient for you as He is sufficient for God. Then feelings and works of the right kind will be forthcoming, not as a ground of peace, but as the fragrant fruit of an enjoyed salvation; not as a title to life, but as the outflow of a life possessed through faith in Christ.

It is interesting to observe the three titles applied to our Lord Jesus Christ as Shepherd. In John 10 He is called "The Good Shepherd" in death. In Heb. 13 He is called "That Great Shepherd" in resurrection. And in 1 Pet. 5 He is called "The Chief Shepherd" in glory. Each title has its own specific meaning, and its own appropriate place.

God's Love Shed Abroad

I would that the shedding abroad of the love were more deeply and joyfully experienced.

"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." What a word! There can be no place of rest for the heart but love, and that place of rest is found, and found only, in God.

"Perfect love casteth out fear." Faith stands at the door, and if a single touch of fear, or suspicion, or reserve, or distance, if a single breath of the spirit of bondage come to the door, and seek admittance, faith lets these travelers know that there is no room for them, the place is preoccupied, and occupied by such an inmate as will certainly be anything but disposed to make room for them."

Gold

It was Satan that so fiercely attacked Job, but God permitted it, and ultimately turned all his affliction to blessing. Meanwhile Job's faith in God held fast, and he triumphed! This faith confounded Satan, and stands throughout the ages as a monument to encourage saints in trial. If our faith endures the trial, it is more precious than gold that perishes.

Grace Be With You

It is not without interest to observe how the Apostle Paul closes his epistles with this desire of his heart.

And indeed, what can be more in keeping with the "grace and truth" that came by Jesus Christ, whose followers we are, than that we should desire this encompassment in a world like this, and amid the many distractions of Christendom?

It is not standing on our rights, for what rights have we? If our just deserts are rendered to us, what can the issue be but "the lake of fire"? But sovereign, unmerited grace to those who merited it not in the least, has been manifested, and from first to last we are debtors to mercy. Where there is the due sense of this in the soul, we shall not be exactors but benefactors. We shall not demand, but be glad to serve, even as "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Oh! how blessed to serve in all humility of mind, for we serve the Lord Christ and the objects of His grace here below. The Apostle could say, "I endure all things for the elects' sakes, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

Do we expect things to go smoothly? We are called to forbear one another in love (Eph. 4:2), and to see to it that we ourselves do not "fail of the grace of God."

May we then consider one another to provoke to love and to good works, and beseech, when called for, "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Our speech should be "always with grace" (this is the staple), "seasoned with salt." It is not good to have too much seasoning, but love never fails and is never inconsistent with "love in the truth."

May His grace ever rest upon us for His name's sake. Amen.

The Hand of God Upon His Own

How little there is among the dear saints of God, of bowing in heart to that word in 1 Pet. 5:6, 7: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

In how many ways does God, in the exercise of His government among His own, put His hand upon us in sickness, in infirmities, or it may be by bringing us into tight places; but how slow are our hearts to lose sight of second causes, and to own Him in all that betides us. And wherefore this slowness? Is it because we cannot trust Him? It is not the hand of a judge smiting me that brings me down, for note the sweet connection: if I own that mighty hand of God upon me, I own also the effect of it is not to drive me from Him, but rather to draw me closer to Him, so close that with the consciousness of His hand upon me I can cast all my care upon Him and rest in the everlasting arms of the One who assures me, "He careth for you." What a sweet lesson to learn that the hand that brings me low, at one and the same moment draws me near!

Hearken to the remnant cry again: "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

The following heart-stirring words are ascribed to the French Huguenots in the days of their bitter persecution: "If perish we must under Thy justice, we shall perish adoring Thee. Thy wrath, would it extinguish us? Then we shall flee to Thy heart. Is extermination Thy design for us? We shall make that new cause to fear Thee. In spite of life, in spite of death, we shall bless the stroke Thy hand applies. They are the blows of a tempest, but they bring us into port."

Surely but a verification of the concluding verses of Rom. 8 "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Hearing and Following

If there be one lack in souls at the present time more marked than another, it is feebleness of appreciation as to these two principle points.

The quietness of communion is but little known, not to say enjoyed, in this busy, active day. How truly the moment speaks loudly of unrest and unreality; and how little is known, even among the saints, of that deep, personal, unexpressed joy in Christ.

The satisfaction of the heart in the personal nearness of the Lord, the being in His company for the simple joy of it, is true communion; thus it is we have common mind with Him, which is the meaning of communion. When this is the case, we know the mind of our Lord and Master, and this it is which qualifies us for every service as Christ's confidential servants. It is well to bear in mind that the amount of our service or the laboriousness of our work does not of itself constitute confidential servants.

There is a very close alliance, a very intimate connection, between the two attitudes of soul we are considering; in fact, they wait the one on the other. It is very blessed to see the producing and maintaining power of hearing and following Christ. In a word, it is Christ. He, and He alone, is the blessed source and spring of all that has its rise and satisfaction in Himself. To be a good listener, one must be both free and at rest. Dear reader, are you? The blessed Son, ever the Father's delight, ever in the bosom of the Father, came into this world of sin, slavery and sorrow, to bring both liberty to the captives and opening of the prison to those who were bound, as well as relief of conscience and rest of heart to every weary soul. His work and Person alone can give freedom and rest. It is mournful to see how little of either exists around us. The disquietude of the age infects the saints, not only in the things that relate to this life, but even in their relationships with God they have not the fixed, settled peace which cannot be moved.

With many at the present time it is, as it were, but the dawn of union, the full day in soul consciousness not having yet come. With them there is but little, if any, repose; unsatisfied longings, ardent desires as yet unmet, abound in many a heart. O how one longs to see His own people possessing conscious knowledge of union with Christ glorified in the place where He is. This imparts rest of heart, and detaches from earth and its things. Thus it is that the soul listens, absorbed with Him who is its rest. The ear, once engaged with other sounds, now does homage at His feet and waits upon His words, knowing how to interpret all the tones of His voice, and to treasure them up in the soul. What could be more blessed than an ear at leisure from self and its surroundings to wait on the Word of Jesus? Then it is that we sit "down under his shadow with great delight," and His fruit is sweet to our taste (Song of Sol. 2:3). Is not this the "house of wine" where He delights to entertain His own during the weary hours of this far-spent night? It is wonderful how little any of us know what real solitude with God is! And may I not ask, How is it possible to grow in personal acquaintance with Christ, if the solitude of His company is not sought after and cultivated by His saints? I hope I may not be understood by any as undervaluing the outward means of instruction and soul refreshment which abound on every hand; nothing could be

more distant from my thoughts. But I do say that these by themselves will not make up for the loss of meditative solitude with God. Another has said, "Never less alone than when alone"; but alas, how little impress of this is left on any of us!

It is interesting to see this illustrated in the history of Elijah. Remarkable servant of God though he was, it is clear that his life inwardly was not sustained in proportion to his outward testimony. With him the fire, wind, and earthquake were everything; and when outward testimony excited the malignity of the enemy, as is usual, his faith was not equal to the pressure. But mark the blessed, tender way of Jehovah with His poor servant.

He is called to go and stand before the Lord, thus proving that solitude is useless unless it be with God. We may be even as he was, under a juniper tree or in a cave (1 Kings 19:4, 9), but that is only the solitude of disappointed nature; there is neither liberty nor rest nor listening in that. Oh, no, it must be with God. "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord" (v. 11).

The demands of nature must not be yielded to. This is typified by the prophet's fasting forty days and forty nights; that which had been supplied to him was the providing of Jehovah's hand-even a "cake baken" and "a cruse of water," supplies outside nature, in the strength of which all its claims can be set aside.

3) The consequence of the two former, the prophet listens-he hears "a still small voice"; thus he receives communications and commissions which previously would have been unintelligible to him.

Following seems to come in as a consequence of what we have had before us: "My sheep hear My voice... and they follow Me." As it is the Shepherd's voice that is heard and known by the sheep, so it is the Shepherd Himself they follow; He it is who has gone before. In the passage quoted from John 10, we find the blessed Lord, scorned and reproached, leaving the ancient fold of Judaism, and thus going before His sheep, the security to all His own that it was the true way as well as the authority for the sheep following Him come what might, their hiding-place from danger, and their safe conduct for the way.

It is very blessed to see how it is the knowing His voice here (vv. 4, 5), not that they know all the false voices of strangers, but their security is in knowing His voice, and they likewise follow as they know it.

Dear reader, has your heart found One whom you are now following? Is this your one object day by day? It is very blessed to be allowed to serve, but many a one serves in this day who is not following. Remember what He Himself says: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me" (John 12:26), showing the importance He attaches to following Him. O for more distinct going forth from all around to follow a rejected Lord and Master, and to esteem it our holiest joy to tread the path He has walked in, rough it may be, but trodden by Himself who has left His own mark upon every rose and every thorn.

"A little while"-He'll come again;

Let us the precious hours redeem;

Our only grief to give Him pain,

Our joy to serve and follow Him.

Watching and ready may we be,

As those that wait their Lord to see."

"The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?... It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." Psalm 118:6, 8

Hebrews: the Epistle

The epistle to the Hebrews opens the heavenly calling. It associates you with Noah, Abraham, Moses and others. Read chapters 11 and 12. The earth at the beginning was given to the children of men. What did they do with it? They forfeited it. Then what did God do with them? Well, He opened heaven to them! He gave them the earth to enjoy-they soiled and lost it by sin.

"Well," said He, "I'll open heaven to you." This is one way in which the grace of God abounds.

What should I say of one who, when I had abused the gift which he put in my hand, put a better gift in my other hand? This is God.

Himself

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

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

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

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

Faith sits and sings-

"All human beauties, all divine,

In my beloved meet and shine."

Let not this evangelistic age give you the work of Christ alone. It tends that way. Without His work, I know, all would be nothing. But let not doctrinal acquaintance with His work turn you from personal acquaintance with Himself.

In Everything

Learn to entwine with your prayers the small cares, the trifling sorrows, the little wants of daily life. Whatever affects you-be it a changed look, an altered tone, an unkind word, a cruel wound, a demand you cannot meet, a sorrow you cannot disclose-turn it into a prayer, and send it up to God. Disclosures you may not make to man, you can make to the Lord. Men may be too little for your great matters, God is not too great for your small ones. Only give yourself to prayer, whatever the occasion that calls for it.

Infidelity: Certain of Nothing but Uncertainty

Infidelity as a principle cannot be conquered. The infidel may through grace become a true believer; but infidelity, which is merely unbelief in a full stage of development, is ineradicable here; it will be unknown in hell. Unbelief is a weed that is indigenous to the heart, and is one of the sad fruits of an evil soil-the flesh-that cannot produce anything good.

Infidelity may assume various forms: it may be ignorant and gross, or it may be cultivated and religious, in which form its danger is multiplied tenfold; and to this we are increasingly exposed today. An unsanctified heart will find pleasure in employing the vast stores of learning that are within reach nowadays to the destruction of the truth of revelation. The Bible becomes the chief point of attack, and the clever infidel brain is unwearied in its endeavor to overthrow its authority and to question its truth. Such is the sad though not surprising effect of education.

But if infidelity cannot be conquered, it may be and is completely answered. It would be strange if sin of any kind could not be met and silenced.

What is infidelity? It is aberration from the truth, the denial of the truth. It is therefore negative both in origin and end; it starts with negation and concludes with the same; it questions everything, but it supplies nothing; it takes, if possible, but it does not give; it dwells amid darkness and doubt while its unhappy admirers feel certain of nothing but their own uncertainty. How could it be otherwise? Now if infidelity be to err from the truth, it is clear that the truth meets, exposes, and answers all error, just as disease, being a derangement of body soundness, is perfectly answered by a healthy state. Obtain health, and disease flies away; establish the truth and there is no place for error. It is answered.

I was struck lately by the statement of a young man who in the course of his daily business is thrown much into the company of professed infidels. He said that some years ago, while a young Christian, he found their questions difficult, and himself laid open to many intellectual perplexities that he could not meet. Just at that time he heard a preacher say that the best answer to infidelity is uncompromising decision for Christ. This short but pregnant sentence found a deep place in his soul, and opened out to him a new line of testimony against unbelief. A life of uncompromising decision for the truth he now saw was the one grand and perfect answer to infidelity. It may not conquer the principle, but the patient, faithful, Christlike life that humbly seeks to maintain the truth is evidently of much greater value as a witness than argument, or evidences, or miracles, or any outward signs.

Argument appeals only to the brain; signs and wonders speak to the eye; but in the life of the true Christian-that beautiful life of self-denial, of holiness, of love, of kindness, and of truth- the life of Christ-there is that which speaks to the conscience, and which reaches therefore a far deeper seat of existence than anything else.

"How came you to be converted?" I once said to a young doctor.

"Just by seeing the lives of So-and-so and So-and-so," he replied.

Yes, the lives. Ah! that is the need of the day- the deep, crying need of the day. How effectually, alas! can the infidel point to many a Christian and say, If that is Christianity, none of it for me! It may be no real excuse for him, yet it is a stumbling block, and a thousand shames to him who causes offense.

Did the ways of Christ stumble anyone? Were they crooked or deceitful or worldly or grasping? Were they not pure and holy and honest and truthful? Could any point to Him and find out inconsistency? Never. "I am absolutely, altogether, what I speak also to you" (John 8:25; W. Kelly). Himself and His ways were the same- absolute harmony-so that a reviling thief at the point of death, won by the discovery of that harmony, could raise his solitary voice in opposition to the universal roar of condemnation, and declare that "this man hath done nothing amiss." It was His life, His being what He said that, speaking after men, converted this poor dying malefactor; and it is Christ reproduced in His people, and seen over again in our ways, the fair fruit of His own grace, uncompromising decision for Him, that alone answers infidelity.

Preaching, argumentation, etc., may fill their place, but life-the life of Christ seen in us-that only avails.

Inspired

One day, walking along the road at what I thought was a good pace, I heard someone overtaking me, and in a moment or two a man much smaller in stature than myself caught up with, and easily passed me. Seeing one so small making better progress than I, I was immediately stirred to put forth more energy, and of course, being the taller of the two, I quickly overtook the little man, and as quickly left him behind. He had not slackened his pace, but I had practically doubled mine.

"Your zeal hath provoked very many" (2 Cor. 9:2).

Is there not a lesson in this for us, dear fellow believer? Of prominent gift we may have but little. We may be small in stature, but if what we may have is made the most of, we are bound to be not only a blessing ourselves, but an encouragement to others who perhaps have far more ability, but who are faltering through discouragement. We never know how far-reaching our influence is.

"Your zeal hath provoked very many."

Many eyes are upon us, dear friends. Let us be zealous, therefore, in everything, and our regard will be great. Our opportunities will soon be gone. Today is all we have. May we be stirred up then to increased energy in the interests of our Lord, of His saints, and of poor, perishing sinners.

"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." Col. 4:5.

The Invisible

The Lord has ways of weaning us from the visible and tangible, and bringing us to live upon the invisible and real. God blows out our candles and makes us find our light in Him, to prepare us for that place in which they need no candle, for the glory of God is their light, and where, strange to tell, they have no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. O that God would gradually lift us up above all the outward, above all the visible, and bring us more into the inward and unseen! If you do not know anything about this, ask the Lord to teach you this riddle; and if you do know it, ask Him to keep you to the life and walk of faith; and never may you be tempted to quit it for the way of sight and feeling.

John 25:9

"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you."

What a blessed secret for the heart to cherish as it passes through circumstances of trial and sorrow here-the greatest Person in the universe loves me, and nothing can separate me from His love! Surely there is an excellency about "the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" which throws all the attractions of the world into the shade!

On such love, my soul, still ponder-

Love so vast, so full, so free.

Say, while lost in holy wonder,

"Why, O Lord, such love to me?"

Matchless Lover!

Grace shall reign eternally.

Jude 21

I have sometimes admired a dog for his economical use of comforts. When it has been a long, rainy day, the sun has just popped out, and there has been a gleam of sunlight on the floor, I have seen him get up and wag his tail, and shift himself about so as to lie down in the bit of sunshine. It is a fine thing to have just that state of mind never to go sullenly into the shadow, but always go cheerfully to accept the square yard of sunshine and make the most of it. There is something, after all, to be thankful for-something for which to praise the name of God.

Little by Little

How vain for an Israelite to have searched for a large piece of manna; and yet when all the small pieces (the "small round thing") were put together, they formed a large piece, quite sufficient to each man "according to his eating." While vainly searching for a large piece, he would neglect to gather up the small pieces which were like coriander seed; and thus his time was spent, and the large piece not found.

Do we keep looking for signal mercies? For large revelations of Christ? And do we neglect to gather together and to store up and feed upon the little (?) mercies and revelations of Himself which strew our pathway all the day? and in which we learn the heart of Him who has strewed them around us on all sides. Could my eyes be wandering in search of a large piece when the wilderness is strewed on all sides around me with small pieces? Have I gathered them all up today? If so, depend upon it, I have more than my eating-I have "all things" and "abound"-surely I have enough at any rate.

The soul is on the way to find itself longing for fish, and onions, and garlic, if it is wandering after a large piece of manna. Life here is made up of little things, and the soul finds Christ in the little things (the "small round thing," so to say); and finding Him, I gather Him up and feed upon Him, and find myself stronger and stronger.

The Living Link With a Living Christ

The Word of God links the soul with Christ as He was and is; it just gives one a written Christ.

See in Matt. 5 "Blessed are the poor in spirit," and who so poor in spirit as Christ? "Blessed are the pure in heart," and who so pure as He? "Blessed are the meek," and who so meek as He? "Blessed are the peacemakers"; He was the great Peacemaker, the very Prince of Peace. (vv. 1-9; Isa. 9:6.)

The first thing, of course, is to have Him as the living Christ for the salvation of the soul; and then, through the written Word, we get the spiritual perception of who this Christ is. It is the simple expression of Christ Himself, of Him who was the express image of God, who "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. And when we thus get the Spirit's testimony to Christ, the heart clings to Him as the "holy" and the "true" (Rev. 3:7).

Thus the Christ found in the Word governs the affections; for we dare not, and would not, be without or depart from this written Christ. This living link to a living Christ is the only safeguard against them that would seduce you.

A holy Christ, in whom we have the truth, is the blessed strong moral assurance of the soul when a mixed and lifeless Christendom is powerless against delusion, and when the same causes make the professing church incapable of discerning a plain path, when there is not faith enough to do without the world, and mixture is everywhere.

Then a holy and true Christ is the assuring guide and stay of the soul. Paul said to Timothy, "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 3:15. And surely there can be no better knowledge to be got than the knowledge of Christ.

This was the point in John's epistle. The father in Christ knew "Him that is from the beginning"; he could tell what the true Christ was; he knew "He that is holy, He that is true" (Rev. 3:7).

It is not development that is needed, but merely the getting back to the simplicity that is in Christ, to know Him truly that was first revealed, He that was from the beginning.

Therefore if my heart is attached to the Christ of the written Word, the Christ that I have loved down here is the same Christ that I am waiting for to come and take me up there.

The Lord's Message: the Lord's Messenger

It is as one lives in the good of the glad tidings of the grace of God that one thinks of others and is in any feeble way the able communicator of the blessed message of God to others.

When I was a child, I used to be sent to deliver messages. My mother had a peculiar habit of saying to me at the last moment, after giving me all her instructions, "Now Harry, to whom are you going and what are you going to say?" It was my defect as to the latter part of the question that she often had to correct in me; I was generally least prepared to answer this part to her satisfaction. It often comes to me that if brethren who desire to evangelize would go through beforehand with God what I had to go through as my mother's messenger, they would have people to go to and something to say; and they would leave off and go home, as I used to, when they had said it.

My mother would finish her instructions by saying to me, "And mind you tell them who sent you!" These three points in my mother's training are good for an evangelist: 1) "To whom are you going?" 2) "What are you going to say?" 3) "Mind you tell them who sent you."

The Loveliness of Christ

Psalm 16

We need every scripture for conviction, correction, and instruction; but the scriptures that present "the things concerning Himself" must have a special charm for the Christian. It is this that makes the 16th Psalm so attractive, for it sets forth the moral perfections of Christ, the perfect Man, as He trod the path of life through this world of sin and death. How good then to look away from self, and the very best of our fellow men, to contemplate this perfect Man in all His excellence-to sit down, as it were, under His shadow with great delight and find His fruit sweet to our taste.

It is reported of one who listened to the ministry of the saintly Rutherford, that he said, "He showed me the loveliness of Christ." In this Psalm we may surely say that David, led by the Spirit, unrolls before us the loveliness of Christ.

We know that Christ is a divine person-the eternal Son and, as such, was the perfect manifestation of God to man. But we also know that He was a true man-the Son of man-and as such, was the perfect expression of man before God. It is in this latter aspect that Christ is presented in this beautiful Psalm.

We can learn what God is, only in Christ; and we can learn what man is in perfection only as set forth in Christ. In Him we see the beautiful qualities, the gracious experiences, the joy and the gladness, that mark the life of the perfect Man before God, together with the fullness of joy to which this life leads. Thus Christ becomes the only standard of excellence-the perfect model for the believer. Moreover, in being occupied with Christ there is a transforming power.

Feeding upon Christ as the Bread of God which "cometh down from heaven"-to trace His path through this world in all its loveliness-will in a special way draw out our affections to Himself. When here, the Father opened the heavens to express His delight in Christ; and He gives us to delight in the same Object in which He delights. Delighting our souls in Him, we shall be changed into His likeness.

Here then we have portrayed in all its blessedness the inner life of a perfect man, lived before God by One who trod this path of life in perfection, and who has reached the end of the path- the right hand of God.

"Preserve Me O God: for in Thee do I put my trust." v. 1. This perfect life is a life of dependence and confidence. Dependence upon the power of God, and confidence in the love of God. The Lord Jesus did not trust Himself or look to others-either men or angels-to be preserved from all the opposition and dangers He had to meet. Nor did He depend upon Himself to meet His needs. He committed Himself with entire dependence to God, saying, "Preserve Me; O God"; and He did so with entire confidence, for He said, "In Thee do I put My trust." He was entirely dependent upon God's hand of power, because He had entire confidence in God's heart of love. With unbounded confidence in boundless love, He looked to God to preserve Him.

He was neither ignorant of, nor indifferent to, His enemies; He could say, "They that hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of Mine head: they that would destroy Me, being Mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty." Psalm 69:4. He knew their number; He knew their strength; He knew their treachery; but He knew that God was above all His enemies, and that no one was above God, and in perfect confidence He looks alone to God. As He can say in the language of another psalm, "As for Me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save Me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear My voice." Psalm 55:16, 17.

And yet, in the perfection of His way, He was at times brought very low in His circumstances, and thus tested in a way, and to an extent, that we shall never know. At times He had not where to lay His head, and on occasions lacked even a cup of cold water. But such testings only brought out the perfections of His manhood; for still He can say, "Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee do I put My trust."

Following in the footsteps of the Lord, the Apostle Paul could say in his prison, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18). Have we such confidence in the love of the Father, and of Christ, that, in the presence of enemies, dangers, and desertion, we can say, "Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust"?

"O My soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art My Lord: My goodness extendeth not to Thee." v 2. The perfect life is a life of wholehearted subjection to the will of God. As the perfectly subject Man, He could say to Jehovah, "Thou art My Lord." Coming into the world, He said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:9). Passing through this world He could say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). Going out of this world, He said, "Father,... not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Doing only the Father's will, all that He did was perfectly good. He "went about doing good." There was also divine goodness toward man, perfectly expressed in the Son of God. But the goodness of which this Psalm speaks, is the goodness of Christ as Man toward men, and though perfect in its place, does not rise to the height of divine goodness. So the Lord can say of this goodness, "My goodness extendeth not to Thee."

Only as we are subject to the Father's will, shall we do good as we pass along our way. When converted, the first question asked by the Apostle Paul was, "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10). Hitherto he had done his own will; now he submits to the will of the Lord. The proud, overbearing Pharisee becomes the lowly man in subjection to the Lord.

"To the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent Thou hast said, In them is all My delight." v 3; J.N.D. Trans. This perfect life is a lowly life that finds its delight with God's poor people. The perfection of Jesus in all His lowly grace is seen in the place He takes in association with the poor of the earth. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" Jas. 2:5.

Are believers lowly and of little account in this world? Then let them remember that the Lord delights to associate with such; for we read, "Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knoweth afar off." Psalm 138:6. To indulge the pride of the flesh and boast in birth and worldly position, is to separate ourselves from the excellent of the earth, and put ourselves "afar off" from God. The word to each one is, "Going along with the lowly" (Rom. 12:16;

J.N.D. Trans.)

However feeble, however failing, however poor, they are the excellent of the earth; and in them God finds His delight. Are we lowly enough in our own eyes, and have we so learned our own nothingness, that we can associate with God's poor people and find our delight where He finds His?

"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." v. 4. The life of the perfect Man is a life of separation from evil. The Lord refused every object that would come in between the soul and God. The devil bid high in the endeavor to turn the Lord from the separate path. He offered Him "all the kingdoms of the world" if He would but worship the devil. The Lord's reply was, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Luke 4:5, 8. A very little bit of this world is too often sufficient to ensnare our souls, and thus we turn aside to seek some passing satisfaction in the things of this world, only to find that we multiply to ourselves sorrows. The Lord refused the idols of this world. He would not take up their names into His lips. The word to us is, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21.

"The Lord is the portion of Mine inheritance and of My cup: Thou maintainest My lot. The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." vv 5, 6. The LORD is the portion of this life and of the inheritance that lies outside this world. Not only was the Lord entirely separate from the world, but the LORD was His portion in another world. Moreover, as He passed along His way to the eternal inheritance, the LORD filled His cup in His daily path. The cup is the actual present enjoyment of the future heavenly portion. With the LORD as His heavenly portion, as well as the source of His present joy, He can say, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." As to circumstances, He was indeed the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It is not, however, the circumstances of which the Psalm speaks, but of the inner life He lived in the circumstances. The life was lived in the sweet enjoyment and support of the Father, and such experiences turned the roughest paths into "pleasant places."

In the dullness of our way we little realize what the joy of a life must be that is lived in relationship with the Father, and the constant enjoyment of all that the Father is. We shall know the fullness of the joy of this life in a day to come; but the Lord Jesus knew it without a cloud as He trod the path of life through this world.

"I will bless the Lord, who hath given Me counsel: My reins also instruct Me in the night seasons." v. 7.

This perfect life is a life in which the LORD is the counselor and guide. It is written that, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). And again we read, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Pro. 3:6. It is not merely that we refer to the Lord in some great emergency, but that we habitually wait upon the Lord in the details of life, great and small. Acknowledging Him, we shall find that He guides us; then shall we be able to say, "I will bless the Lord, who hath given Me counsel."

"I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved." v. 8. The perfect life has only one object—the Lord Himself. Christ walked on earth with singleness of eye. He set Jehovah before Him as His only Object. In such a life there is nothing of self, and no

room for self-will.

Setting the LORD before Him, He found the LORD was ever at hand to support Him. Moreover, being at His right hand to support, nothing moved Him from the path of life.

Such is the path open to the believer. Alas! we have to own how little we know of its blessedness; and yet, if day by day, we set the Lord before us as our one Object-to serve Him, to please Him, to do His will-shall we not find that He will be at our right hand to support us? And being supported, we shall not be moved, or turned aside, by any trying circumstances, opposition, slights, or sufferings we may be called to meet.

"Therefore my heart is glad, and My glory rejoiceth: My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." vv. 9, 10. This perfect life has its joy and gladness, though not like the joy of this world that depends upon outward circumstances. The Lord says, "My heart is glad," not necessarily, My circumstances are bright. The joy is in the heart, even as David can say, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." Psalm 4:7. The world's joy is in prosperous circumstances, the corn and the wine. The Lord could say to His disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you" (John 15:11).

The Lord's joy remains even in view of death, for His confidence is still in God; "Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell [Sheol]; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." Christ is indeed the "Holy One," but believers are "holy and beloved," and, as such, can know the blessedness of the life of Christ as Man. They, too, can look on with confidence, knowing that God will not leave the soul in death, nor the body in corruption.

"Thou wilt show Me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." v. 11. This life is a life lived in the light of the glory to which it leads. Every path has a destined end. "The path of life" leads into the presence of the LORD, where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore. In all the opposition the Lord Jesus had to meet-the contradiction of sinners, the insults and reproach from the religious world, the ignorance and forsaking of His own-He endured in the light of the glory before Him. As we read, "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." The word to us is, "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Alas! we often break down in the presence of contradiction and insult; we grow weary and faint under the pressure of a long, drawn-out trial, because we lose sight of the glory at the end of the road-the joy that is set before us. Instead of quietly enduring insults and shame, too often we return evil for evil, and railing for railing. We may attempt to justify our strong words and our hasty acts, but the one test is, Would Jesus have acted as we did? Would Jesus have said what we did?

If then we would think and speak and act as the Lord Jesus did when treading the path of life-if in any measure we would experience the blessedness of the lovely life marked out by Christ-let us tread the path, "Looking unto Jesus" in the glory-the end of the path-and let us "Consider" Jesus as He trod the path of life.

Then it may be the transforming power of the loveliness of Christ will, even now, change us into His image "from glory to glory."

Moreover, let us remember that the grace that enabled the Lord to tread the path of life is available for us; for, from His place in the glory, He still serves us as our Great High Priest, to succor, sympathize, and sustain us as we seek to follow in His steps in the path of life that He has marked out for us. Whatever we may have to meet, whatever we may be called upon to endure-opposition, insults, or desertions-let us remember the word, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 2:1.

Such is the loveliness of Christ as He trod the path of life, lived in all its beauty before God, and marked out for His people to follow. A life of dependence upon the Father's hand of power, confidence in the Father's heart of love, and subjection to the Father's will. A life of lowliness that finds its delight with God's poor people-the excellent of the earth. A life of separation from evil, finding in the Lord its future portion and its present cup of blessing. A life guided by the counsel of the Lord, and which has the Lord as its one Object, and has the Lord ever present to support. A life of secret joy and gladness that ends at last in the presence of the Lord, where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore. H.S.

"For the path where our Savior is gone
Has led up to His Father and God,
To the place where He's now on the throne,
And His strength shall be ours on the road.
"And with Him shall our rest be on high,
When in holiness bright we sit down,
In the joy of His love ever nigh,
In the peace that His presence shall crown."

Make Straight Paths

"Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." Heb. 12:13. There are lame saints, and it is the lame men who need a straight road. A man full of Christ can walk through many a difficulty without suffering for it, but all are not such. And for those who are not, remove every difficulty out of the way. Be of good cheer; you are come to Mount Zion, or grace.

The Mystery of Godliness

They are not human motives that form and fashion and produce the morality of a Christian, any more than it is human power that accomplishes his salvation. It is "the grace of God" that teaches him as well as saves him.

This is very remarkably shown in a passage in Timothy (1 Tim. 3:16), the force of which is very frequently overlooked. The Apostle would teach Timothy how he ought to behave himself "in the house of God"; and he then presents the formative power of all true godliness in the words, "And confessedly the mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh, has been justified in [the] Spirit, has appeared to angels, has been preached among [the] nations, has been believed on in [the] world, has been received up in glory." J.N.D. Trans.

This is often quoted and interpreted as if it spoke of the mystery of the Godhead, or the mystery of Christ's Person. But it is the mystery of godliness, or the secret by which all real godliness is produced—the divine spring of all that can be called piety in man. "God... manifest in the flesh" is the example and the power of godliness, its measure and its spring. Godliness is not now produced, as under the law, by divine enactments; nor is it the result in the spirit of bondage in those (however godly) who only know God as worshipped behind a veil. Godliness now springs from the knowledge of the incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. It takes its spring and character from the knowledge of His Person as "God... manifest in the flesh"; the perfectness of His obedience as "justified in the Spirit"; the Object of angelic contemplation, and the subject of testimony and faith in the world; and His present position as "received up into glory."

This is how God is known; and from abiding in this flows godliness. The object of faith is the power of life.

Nebuchadnezzar: Head of Gold

Dan. 1-4

There is much interest attached to the person of this great Gentile. The place he occupies in the progress of the divine dispensations, the circumstances which connect him with the saints of God, and his own personal history-all contribute to give him a place in our recollections, and to teach us some holy and important lessons.

He was the man in whom God set up the Gentiles. The house of David, the throne of Judah, had corrupted itself; the measure of the people's iniquity was full, and the term of the divine longsuffering was spent in Nebuchadnezzar's day; and he is used by the Lord to be the rod of His indignation against Jerusalem, and the hand to take from Him the sword of rule and judgment in the earth.

The glory had departed. It had left the earth. The prophet Ezekiel had seen it in its gradual and reluctant, but sure and judicial, flight on the cherubim and the wheels as far as the mountains on its way to heaven. But though "the glory is departed" might have been written on Jerusalem, "the glory is here" could not have been correspondingly written on any seat or city of the nations.

This Chaldean, however, this Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon is set up by the Lord, and the sword is committed to him. Power in the earth for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well, is put into his hand-formally put there-by God, on the glory forsaking the earth, or the Lord for the present refusing to take His place as King of Israel.

This is Nebuchadnezzar's connection with the dispensational purposes of God. He was glad, of course, to extend his dominions and to let his conquests be known far and wide, and Jerusalem is welcome plunder to him; but all the while he was filling out the purposes of God. At length his sword is in its sheath, and we see him not in connection with the purposes, but with the saints, of God; and then we get a more perfect sight of him, and a subject of still holier interest and meaning. For then we see the man under divine operation, and not merely the power under divine commission and appointment. And it is this sight which Daniel gives of him in these chapters.

The tumult of war being over, and the sword, as I said, in its sheath again, the king is seen in his place at Babylon. His royal estate he purposes to set off to all advantage. Elegancies and accomplishments and provisions of all sorts shall fill his court. Both his greatness and his pleasures shall be served by all that conquered lands can furnish, and the ancient land of the glory is now only one of them. Babylon, famed for its wisdom in its astrologers and soothsayers, shall be set off by some of the captive youths of Judah, distinguished for their understanding science, and skillfulness in knowledge. This is Chapter 1.

As it often happens, the Lord comes to disturb him. His heart is moved, if not his estate and condition in the world. Ere he went to sleep one much-to-be-remembered night, he is thinking on what was to be thereafter. He then sleeps and dreams and, the dream being all about what was to

be thereafter, shows that the hand of God was in the whole scene. The king, however, does not understand anything of all this. Even the dream itself goes from him. He has no remembrance of it. It leaves uneasiness behind it, but that is all. Often it is thus with the soul. There is a disturbance, but no intelligence. A restlessness has been awakened; but whence it came is not known, or whither it goes (what is its purpose) is not conjectured. And it is too high for man. It is the hand of God, and mere man cannot reach it. All the wisdom of Babylon is at fault. The dream, the departed dream which had left only its shadow to scare the heart of the king, is beyond all Chaldean art. This is beautifully significant. We live amid these wonderful shakings, these hidden operations of God with the hearts of the children of men. The man of God, however, gets into the secret. The saint is made to know the mind of God in this great operation of His hand. Daniel tells it all to the king.

Nebuchadnezzar is naturally moved to wondering admiration. The knowledge of the prophet is marvelous in his eyes, and all that he can do for him he is ready to do. The wisdom of the God of Daniel he also religiously acknowledges and, under the excitement, even delights in it. This is the second chapter.

But with all this he is but Nebuchadnezzar still, a mere child of nature, the sport of human passions and of the devil's wiles. Vanity seems to feed on the communications which the prophet of God had delivered. Wonderful, but natural! These communications had dealt with solemn truths- that an image was to be broken in pieces and made like the chaff of the summer threshing floor. But this is all passed by the heart of the king, and that he himself is the head of this image, the golden head of it, is all that practically works on him. His pride can get food out of that; but the rest may remain for a future day, however awful it may be.

Accordingly, he sets up a golden image for all to worship. All orders and estates of men are summoned by musical instruments of all sorts to own the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Strange that our hearts can so deal with God's revelations! God had spoken of an image being broken in pieces and scattered like the chaff before the wind. Nebuchadnezzar can set up an image to be honored with divine honors by all the world! How falsely the heart traffics with divine truth! Admiration of God's wisdom will not do; Nebuchadnezzar had that. But with that he was a self-worshiper, and to himself he can sacrifice everything. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the very instruments or vessels for awakening that admiration, shall burn in the fiery furnace if they consent not to fall down before the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Wonderful infatuation!

God, however, is but again displayed. If wisdom belongs to Him, so does power. If He can reveal secrets and make known the thoughts of the head upon the bed of the children of men, He can quench the violence of fire and save every hair of the head from perishing, though in a burning fiery furnace. The king is again moved, and he does more than before. He had honored the servants of the God of wisdom already; now he is for honoring the God of power Himself, establishing His name in the land, and making reverence of Him a part of the business of the state, a standing ordinance of the realm. (Ch. 3).

But what of this? He is, as before, Nebuchadnezzar still-the haughty child of the dust-man who, like Adam of old, would be as God. For, after these witnesses of divine wisdom and power, and after the motions which his heart and conscience had passed through, he was, as in earlier days,

at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace (Dan. 4:4). He was the same self pleasing, important King of Babylon.

Nature outlives a thousand checks and improvements. The new wine poured into the old bottle is but spilled. "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." Matt. 11:17. The various melodies of the dispensations of God are lost on the dull ear of man. But the Lord is not weary. He can still sit at the well and talk with the sinner. He shakes the heart of this king with another dream, and Daniel again interprets it. It is still, however, the new wine in the old bottle, and it is spilled as ever. Twelve months after this solemn visitation the king walks in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and his poor proud heart, after all this, can say, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Dan. 4:30.

How surely is old Nebuchadnezzar still the "old man" of nature. The divine revelations are spent on him in vain. All the goodly emotions are but as the morning cloud and early dew. The new wine, to be preserved, must be put into new bottles. And so at last it is. Nebuchadnezzar is made a new bottle. Deeply and solemnly is this process conducted and this work accomplished. The sentence of death is lawfully laid on him. The case is one of great character; and it might well be so, because, as we have seen, the light of the wisdom of God, and the hand of the power of God, had already addressed this man; and the further care and diligence of the Lord had been in the recent dream also bestowed upon him, but all to no real purpose. The new wine had been spilled again and again. Nebuchadnezzar is the same man still, and the old bottle is now to be cast away. The former vessel having been marred on the wheel, the lump is now taken into the Potter's hand, to fashion it another vessel, a new vessel, as it pleases Him. The story of this operation, as I said, is solemn beyond expression. "Man that is in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." Psalm 49:20. Indeed Nebuchadnezzar had been in honor, but he had not understood; and now he becomes as a beast.

"He was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." Thus is he made to know himself, and to learn the lesson that he was, in all his honor, as brutish as the cattle of the field, having no understanding.

The occasion was unique, and the display of the operation of God signal almost without a parallel. But if he learns that he has destroyed himself, he shall learn also that there is One that lifts up even from dunghills; and under the further working of His gracious as well as mighty hand, Nebuchadnezzar revives. He becomes a risen man in due season. The field and the oxen are left, his understanding returns to him, his kingdom and its glory, his honor and its brightness, his nobles and his counselors, all return to him, and even excellent majesty is added to him. And then, as one of understanding indeed, who had come to the knowledge of God and himself, he no longer thinks of honoring God by state decrees only, ordinances of his realm, but bows before Him as sovereign Lord in heaven and on earth, and publishes His doings. He is no longer the king, but the dependent.

The New or the Old

If we think it is too much to be always obedient and dependent, then we are catering to the flesh. The real question is, Do we want to walk in the power of the new creation or the old? True happiness is to be found in walking in the light in the judgment of ourselves, and in looking to the Lord for everything. Why should we wish to retain the flesh after we have rejoiced in our deliverance from it? Why should we not be walking in the consciousness of the love of God and of Christ? But the world and other things may be so allowed that we scarcely know what Christian life really is. (Rom. 14:17 and 15:13.)

No Ending

"To be continued," are words not pleasant sometimes when you are reading an interesting story, yet what a comfort to know that the Lord's mercies and goodness are "to be continued." We can by no means outlive His eternal love. The doings of His grace are but a series to continue.

Nobility Obligates

"Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1). The French aphorism, *Noblesse oblige*, says, "Nobility obligates." The Christian's calling, just because it is such a high calling, places him under obligation to walk in a manner suited to it, or "worthy" of it. In some people we are not surprised to see carelessness, meanness, or even profligacy. But in a Queen or a Princess, those same things would shock us. They are totally out of keeping with high rank. Let the Christian see to it that his walk (manner of life) is consistent with the position in which grace has placed him. F.W.

The only true place of dignity and power is the place of felt weakness and dependence. The moment a child of God makes himself a debtor to nature or the world, he loses his dignity, and will speedily be made to feel his loss. Grace forgives the sin and restores the soul, but that which is sown must be reaped. Abraham and Sarah had to endure the bondwoman and her son for a number of years, and then get rid of them in God's way.

Nothing Like the Cross

There is nothing like the cross. It is the meeting of the awful sin of man, with the perfect love of God. Sin risen up to the highest point of evil, and gone, put away, and lost in its own worst act. God is above man, even in the height of his sin; not in allowing it, but in putting it away by Christ's dying for it in love. The soldier's insulting spear, the witness if not the instrument of death, was answered by the blood and water which expiated and purified from the blow which brought it out. Sin was known, and to have a true heart, it must be known; and God was known, known in light. And the upright heart wants that, but known in perfect love, before which we had no need to hide or screen our sin.

Obedience

There is nothing so humble, nothing which so marks the Spirit's presence, nothing so opposed to insubordination, nothing by which every ungodly voice is so utterly silenced, as by obedience. Obedience is the only rightful state of the creature, or God would cease to be supreme-would cease to be God. "Sin is lawlessness"-doing one's will without consulting God. Blessing for the Christian follows obedience (John 15:10; 14:23; Jer. 7:23). Willingness to do God's will is necessary for further light. See John 7:17.

Our Heavenly Portion

It is of real importance for our joy that we should be diligent in seeking our own portion in Christ (1 Cor. 2:9, 10; Eph. 1:3; Rom. 8:17). The Church has its own joys, its own interests, its own treasures, its own sphere of life, its own field for the affections, its own topics-its own world, in short, in which there is fruit unto God. Have you, dear reader, consciously this portion, and is it the delight of your soul to search out therein the riches of Christ? the goodness that is in God? This holy labor, in searching out the riches that are in Christ, keeps us in the lively sense of what is ours in Him, and therefore makes all else worthless.

Our Position

"He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

Here then is the position of the Christian, and it is a position of deep blessedness, to stand as Christ stands before God, without the shadow of imputation of sin, perfectly justified, loved with the same love. This is Christ's joy and delight to bring His own into the same blessedness with Himself; to say to them, "My Father and your Father; My God and your God" (John 20:17).

Pardon Mine Iniquity; for It Is Great

In Psalm 25 the godly Jews in that coming day own their sins, and what is the great word that they use about themselves? "Pardon mine iniquity"-why? "for it is great." What a wonderful thing to say to God! They could not say it to man. If a criminal were to ask the judge who was trying him, to pardon his iniquity because it was great, I need not say that the whole court would stare with amazement at the man's presumption. But what would be presumption to the world and before men is exactly the confidence of faith. And that is precisely what God works in a soul that is converted-integrity of heart in owning and confessing its sins. And so there is not merely a cleansing of the sins, but a cleansing from all unrighteousness. That is a different thing.

There is clearly a work which is wrought in the soul. Guile is taken away from the soul. There is not the hiding of sin. There is integrity, but it is integrity produced by confidence in God's mercy.

And what is it in the 25th psalm which had given confidence in this mercy? Ah! think of it! What had preceded? The 22nd psalm.

There is an order in these things. We must not suppose that the psalms are just tumbled into their places. They are put in their places by God just as much as they were written by God's inspiration. They might be written at ever so distant a time, and I do not at all suppose that they were written in the order in which they appear; but they are arranged-they are disposed-in an order which is as divine as the words that compose them. You could not change the order of a single psalm without spoiling the truth. It would be like tearing a leaf out of a most beautiful plant which would leave a gap most sensible to anyone who knew what the plant ought to be, or what it really was according to God's constitution of it.

Here then we see this very thing. The grace of God in giving Christ to suffer on the cross opens their hearts to tell out their sins; and they can say, "For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." That is indeed the reason. The greatness of it, no doubt, requires such a sacrifice; but in the presence of such a sacrifice there is no asking for consideration because the sin was little but, on the contrary, to pardon it because it was so great.

The Passover and the Red Sea

It is well to distinguish, for our souls' profit, the difference between the Passover and the Red Sea. For a person may hear the gospel and receive it with joy, and be rejoicing in forgiveness of sins; he may see the loveliness of Christ, and have his affections drawn out toward Himself; but if full redemption is not known as typified by the Red Sea, if he does not know himself to be risen with Christ on the other side of death and judgment, he is almost sure to lose his joy when temptation comes and he feels his own weakness.

The joy of Exod. 15 is that God has absolutely redeemed them out of Egypt and brought them in His strength to His holy habitation. This is a very different thing from the joy of the Passover- being delivered from just and deserved judgment. In the Passover Jehovah has made Himself known to them as the God of judgment. The blood on the doorposts screened them from judgment; it kept Him out, and He did not come into their houses to destroy. Had He come in, it must have been in judgment. At the Red Sea it was another thing-even God coming in strength as their salvation. The Passover delivered them from His judgment; the Red Sea, from their enemies.

The moment His people are in danger from Pharaoh, He comes in. The very sea they dreaded and which appeared to throw them into Pharaoh's hands, becomes the means of their salvation. Thus, through death God delivered them from death; like as Christ went down into the stronghold of Satan, went down under the power of death and, rising again from the dead, delivered us from death. Thus was there an end of Pharaoh and Egypt to them forever.

The Red Sea is redemption out of Egypt; God Himself is their salvation. He whom they had feared, and justly as a judge, is become their salvation. They were redeemed, no longer were hoping for mercy, but able to rejoice that judgment was passed, and to sing His praises for having brought them to His holy habitation-to God Himself, in the light as He is in the light- and brought there before they had taken one step in the wilderness, or fought one battle with their enemies.

There is no conflict properly till redemption is known. They did not attempt to fight with Pharaoh, but only to get away from him. They groaned under his yoke, but did not combat against him. How could they? They must be brought to God first-be the Lord's host before they can fight His enemies or their own. And so it is with an individual soul. I have no power to combat Satan while I am still his slave. I may groan under his yoke and sigh to be delivered from it; but before my arm can be raised against him, I must have a complete and known redemption. The Israelites are not only happy in escaping the pursuer; it is a full conscious redemption from Egypt and Pharaoh, and they can count on God's power for all the rest. "The people shall hear, and be afraid:... the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away" (Exod. 15:14, 15). Their joy does not arise from having no enemies, but from God's own divine power taking them up and putting them in His own presence.

Peace and My Peace

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you."

In comparing different aspects of peace it is helpful to note that in John 14:27 the Lord distinguishes between peace left to us and peace given to us. "Peace I leave with you" is peace with God as to every question of sin. He has made it by the blood of His cross, and brought the tidings of it on the evening of the day of His resurrection when He stood in the midst of His own and greeted them with "Peace be unto you." He showed them, too, His hands and His side as the witness of the work in which it had been accomplished, and commissioned them to go forth with it to others (John 20:19-21). It was the precious legacy of His death. We have it (Rom. 5:1) as we believe the testimony of God to the facts of His having been delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. It is peace of conscience. He could not speak of it as His. He never needed it; we did, and He made it and left it to us.

But the Lord goes on to speak of a deeper character of peace-"My peace I give unto you." It is the peace in which He ever walked with the Father, the calm unruffled peace which resting in His love and submitting Himself absolutely to all His ways afforded. He characterizes it as His, and has given it absolutely to be ours-not as the world gives indeed, for, though it may give largely and generously, it gives away; but He gives as bringing us into the possession of it with Himself. It is here applied to His peace, but the principle is true of all He gives-as His joy (chap. 15:11), His glory (chap. 17:22), and the place He has in His Father's love (vv. 23, 26). How surely our hearts would own that the way He gives is the richest thing in what He gives, even that we possess it all in and with Himself. The second peace, then, coming in its own perfect order, is peace of heart, of the heart that has found Christ's own resting place as its own in a Father's love well known. We are entitled to count it ours, and that by His absolute gift, now to live in it practically through all the stress and strain of circumstances. Once again it is formally referred to in the epistles (Col. 3:15): "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (J.N.D. Trans. and other critical versions), holding its blessed sway in all that is there, "to the which also ye are called in one body," and thus in all our relations with our fellow-Christians.

It only remains to emphasize the strongly conditional character of the peace promised in Phil. 4:5, 6. But the condition is only that we trust God with what would suggest care to us, putting the care upon Him instead of carrying it as a burden upon our hearts. And now it is not the peace of Christ, who as man passed through the scene of trial, but the peace of God on the throne where no breath of trial ever came, which He guarantees shall keep our hearts and minds. And if our poor hearts would say that it is utterly incomprehensible, God has anticipated us and tells us that it passeth all understanding. He does not expect us, then, to understand it, but acting upon His Word in simple confidence of heart in Him we shall realize the truth of it. May it ever be more and more so with us.

Perfect in Christ

The believer is perfect in Christ; but, in himself, he is a poor feeble creature, ever liable to fall. Hence the unspeakable blessedness of having One who can manage all his affairs for him, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens-One who upholds him continually by the right hand of His righteousness-One who will never let him go-One who is able to save to the uttermost-One who is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever"-One who will bear him triumphantly through all the difficulties and dangers which surround him.

The Power of the Name of Jesus

There was a notorious thief in the south parts of Scotland, about two hundred years ago, called "John of the Score," who for many years had followed that wicked trade. At length he met with a poor man traveling with two horses, which Score took from him. The poor countryman, falling upon his knees, earnestly begged that for Jesus Christ's sake he would give him the one again; for he had no more to maintain his poor family with but what he could get by their labor. But all was in vain, for the thief carried both away to his own home, leaving the poor man in a very desolate condition.

However, not long after, Score became very unhappy and melancholy. He could get no rest nor quiet, yet he knew not the cause, only he professed that the words which the poor man spoke (though he was so great an atheist that he understood not what he meant when he spoke of Christ,) lay like a great weight upon his spirit.

When he was sought after for his robberies, he bade his sons to shift out of the way; but for himself he could not fly, there being a restraint upon him, and something within him that bound him from going out of the way. He stayed in his house till he was apprehended, and brought up to Edinburgh, and there put in prison.

While he was there a godly preacher, Mr. Henry Blith, and a Christian gentleman, William Cunningham, tutor of Boniton, who had known him, paid him a visit. They brought before him his miserable estate, and the danger that his soul was in (for he was condemned by the law to die), pressing upon him the necessity of flying to Jesus Christ. Whereupon he suddenly cried out, "Oh, what word is that? for it has been my death: that's the word that has lain upon my heart, ever since the poor man spoke it to me, so that from that time I had no power to shift out of the way." Afterward, being told who Jesus Christ was, without whom he could not be saved, he cried, "Oh, will He ever look at me, and show me mercy, who for His sake would not show mercy to that poor man, and give him back his horse?" Yet, after further instruction, a real and glorious change appeared in him, and he gave most convincing evidences of the reality of salvation. He attained to great assurance before his death, and upon the scaffold, in the public street, where he was executed, spoke so wonderfully of the Lord's dealing with him, and that with such knowledge and judgment, as left a conviction upon all present that he had been truly saved by the grace of God.

The Prodigal and the Father's Love

The prodigal found a higher place and tasted higher communion than he had ever known before. "The fatted calf" had never been slain for him before. "The best robe" had never been on him before. And how was this? Was it a question of the prodigal's merit? Oh! no; it was simply a question of the Father's love.

Thoughts on Psalm 67

There are several most important principles in this brief and beautiful psalm. The first is, that the blessing of the nations is dependent upon the restoration of Israel to divine favor. The remnant cries, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us; Selah. That Thy way be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations." vv. 1, 2. That this is God's order for the blessing of the world, is clear from many scriptures. (See Rom. 11:11-15; Isa. 27:6; etc.) In this day of grace the gospel goes out to Jew and Gentile alike, and "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Rom. 10:13. But there will be no such thing in the present dispensation, during the time of Israel's unbelief, as the conversion of nations. When, however, at the Lord's appearing, the Deliverer comes out of Zion and turns away ungodliness from Jacob, and all Israel shall be saved, blessing will flow out according to our psalm to the ends of the earth; Israel will blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit. Another thing may be observed in connection with this prayer. "God be merciful unto us," they say, "and bless us... that Thy way may be known upon the earth," etc. They desire blessing that their God may be glorified among all nations. This is a very high order of prayer, and cannot but remind the reader of that of the blessed Lord Himself when He said, "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." We might well be instructed by these perfect models, both bearing the stamp of the same workmanship of the Holy Spirit, whether in the hearts of the remnant or on the lips of our Lord.

The second thing to be pointed out in the psalm is, that the happiness, both of Israel and the Gentiles, in the Millennium, will depend upon Messiah's righteous government. "Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth." vv. 3, 4. This is in complete contrast with the present time. Now grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5:21), and grace is the source of our joy and blessedness (Eph. 2); but then, during the kingdom, while all proceeds from grace, inasmuch as all is based upon the death and resurrection of Christ, it is His righteous reign which will secure and maintain the blessing of the earthly saints, as well as be the theme of their thanksgiving and praise (See Psalm 72).

Last, we learn that the fertility of the earth is bound up with the blessing of Israel and the nations. "Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase," etc. (See Isa. 55:12, 13; Eze. 34:23, 27.) Thus the curse of the ground on account of Adam's sin (Gen. 3) will be abrogated when Christ as the Son of man has put all things under His feet. (Compare Hag. 2:15-19; Amos 9:11-15.) There is even more, for they add, "God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." It will be a time of universal earthly blessing.

Reconciliation

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.... Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us: we pray in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; see J.N.D. Translation.

Man has departed from God and become His enemy. He needs reconciliation. Satan seeks to lead the sinner to believe that God is against him, and that He needs to be propitiated by works of his. Hence the vast amount of religious doings in the flesh. Tens of thousands seek to reconcile God by their fleshly efforts to be good and religious. But the Word of God shows clearly that it is man, the sinner, who needs reconciling to God, and not God to the sinner. There is a vast difference between the two.

The full enmity of man against God, in the Person of Christ, came out at the cross. Put to the proof in various ways for some four thousand years or so, the cross fully manifested the sinner's condition as an enemy of God. While God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, we find the world at large refused the goodness of God, and crucified His Son. And while the cross of Christ, on the one hand, seals the world's condemnation, on the other, it is the expression of the wondrous love of God to man. It is the basis upon which God in righteousness now sends forth the word of reconciliation. Paul and others declared it in the early days of Christianity; and it is the privilege of God's servants now to announce the same blessed tidings to all, according to the ability given.

Hence God in grace has now taken the attitude of beseeching sinners to be reconciled to Him. The Apostle, coupling his companions with himself, says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Cor. 5:20. The sinner must be reconciled in the day of His grace, or come before God in judgment in the future in his sins. It will be too late to be reconciled then. "Behold, now is the day of salvation". 2 Cor. 6:2.

God having been glorified in the finished work of the cross, raised His Son from the dead. Grace now reigns, and all who come to Him in self judgment, by faith in the name of His Son, are justified and reconciled. Our Lord when on earth, gave us a striking illustration of the manner of our reconciliation to God, in the story of the prodigal son. In this dissatisfied, ungodly worldling, Jesus illustrated the moral condition of the publicans and sinners of that day; but it also sets forth the state of the unconverted world without God at the present time. Reduced to beggary and misery through his own sin, and having failed in his own efforts to remedy his condition, he made up his mind to return to his father and confess his sin. "He arose, and came.... But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Luke 15:20. Lovely picture of the sinner's reconciliation to God! Take your place before Him, dear reader, like the prodigal son, in self-judgment and confession, if you have never done so before, and you will be reconciled in like manner. If you seek to justify yourself, you are like the Pharisees and scribes who are illustrated in the elder son, and you will be found outside the place

of blessing. But if you come to God, like the prodigal arose and came to his father, you will find yourself the object of His love, and His Spirit bearing witness with your spirit that you are a child of God. And henceforth, "Abba, Father," will be your cry.

Let us dwell a little upon the manner of this reconciliation. Five things may be especially noted. The father saw, compassionated, ran to meet, embraced, and kissed his son. The father saw. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him." Occupied with his long lost one, he was on the lookout for his return. His eye lighted on him in the distance. Recognizing the wellknown form, the heart followed the eye, and was filled with compassion toward his son. Love immediately sped the feet, and he ran to meet him. And there, just as he was in all his wretchedness, love satisfied itself by folding the lost one in its fond embrace. His eyes saw, his heart compassionated, his feet sped, his arms embraced, and his lips covered him with kisses.

The son confesses his sin, but is interrupted by the father ere he can talk, as he had intended, about being a hired servant. Luke 15:18-23. He was welcomed and treated as a son. Not a word of reproach escaped the lips of his loving parent. His return and his confession were a witness to his repentance, and immediately a heart of love lavishes its all upon the object of its affection. This is the way of love.

Blessed triumph of grace! Lovely picture of the grace of our God! Dear reader, what do you know of all this? Have you judged and confessed the past? Do you know what it is to be reconciled to God, folded in His everlasting arms? Have the kisses of peace and reconciliation been imprinted upon your cheek? "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Rom. 4:7, 8. Do you know, too, the blessedness of being included in that precious verse, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life"? Rom. 5:10. If so, you too, can join with all His own in adding, "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." Rom. 5:11; see J.N.D. Translation.

And the father said to the servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry," etc. Luke 15:22, 23. Grace abounds. The best of everything for the reconciled one, alone will satisfy a father's heart. It was not a question of his deserts, but a heart of love finding its gratification in the blessing of its object. Wondrous grace! And this is the way of our God, fellow believers. All that love can devise and grace bestow is lavished upon every sinner who returns to Him. Clad with heaven's best robe; sealed with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption; fitted to walk before Him, it is now the joy and privilege of every child of God to feast with a loving Father upon the exceeding riches of His grace. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 5:20, 21.

Beloved reader, this is the manner of the sinner's reconciliation to God. Are you reconciled? E.H.C. "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Psalm 130:3

Redemption

Exod. 12:1-15 Pet. 1:18, 19

What is the character of the second book of the Bible? Redemption. In the third chapter we find the blessed God come down in the burning bush, and He says to Moses, "I am come down to deliver." "I have... seen... and have heard... and I am come down." Go to the end of Exodus, 33rd verse of the 40th chapter. What have we there? God dwelling in the midst of His redeemed people, pitching His habitation among them. We get in the 12th and 15th chapters, the way in which He did it. The first thing was to shelter that people from judgment. That could only be done by the blood of the Lamb. The first thing God gives a soul to know when really exercised, is security from judgment under the blood of Christ, but we must not stop there.

Look at the first of Ephesians-just a word, speaking of Christ as the Beloved. 7th verse, "In whom" (that is, Christ the Beloved) "we have redemption." How far does that go? "the forgiveness of sins." Now go to the second chapter, 12th verse, "without God in the world," "without Christ." I trust that it is not the condition of any who read this article. "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Don't you see there are two things there. First the forgiveness of sins. That redemption we have in Christ through His blood, brings with it the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. It also gives something else: takes me out of the old condition, and gives me a place of nearness to God Himself. You see the difference there. One is in advance of the other, so we must not stop with being secured from judgment.

That blood on the two side posts and the lintel, told that death had come in. It told the stroke had fallen on a victim-a life had been given. There is another thing in that passage we read in 1 Peter. "Forasmuch as ye know." The Christian knows what? That he is redeemed. According to Scripture it is the normal condition of the Christian. There are those who have faith in the Lord Jesus, who do not know much about the blood-about being covered. That was my own experience. I accepted the Lord Jesus, but did not know my security or much about the blood until later on. I think there are those who are saved, though they do not have the full assurance of it at first.

What is the force of that word in the 13th verse of the 12th of Exodus, "The blood shall be to you for a token"? God sees the blood, but it is my seeing it that brings me into peace. The blood speaks to the soul inside, and wards off the stroke outside. It is the soul seeing the blood for himself that brings into the knowledge of safety.

In connection with the children, when they asked what was meant by this service, they were told how to answer them. In Exodus the 3rd chapter, God had come down, and what had brought Him down? It was the bondage, misery, groaning and oppression of His people. I have "heard," I have "seen"-that had brought Him down to deliver. There He appears in the midst of the burning bush.

Now open to the 1st of Leviticus and compare that with the 3rd of Exodus. "God called unto him Moses out of the midst of the bush," in Exodus. In Leviticus, "The Lord called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation." What a contrast! That gives the

character to those two books. God came down to deliver. After He delivers, He sets His habitation in the midst of His people. Out of the midst of that habitation He appears and tells them how to approach Him. The subject of Exodus is redemption. The subject of Leviticus is the redeemed drawing near to God the Redeemer. There is more order in the Word of God than people think. It is not brought together at random.

What is the character of the book of Numbers? It is the wilderness journey. It is a redeemed people, and they are not in Egypt nor in Canaan, but in the wilderness, but journeying on to it. Egypt behind, Canaan before, and they in the wilderness. Now, that is the book of Numbers.

What is the book of Deuteronomy? That answers to the judgment seat of Christ. "Thou shalt remember all the way," etc. We will have a rehearsal when we get into our Canaan, and before we have entered fully into it. We Christians have a Deuteronomy before we get into the land, too. We are in Numbers. Redemption has brought us into Numbers. We know all the way God has led us since He brought us out of Egypt. "Thou shalt remember," etc. It must have been very humiliating as Moses called their attention to all their ways. But as it humbled them, it magnified the grace and goodness of God, and that is what our Deuteronomy will do, too. There was some reason for this being given to them. "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations: ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever." Exod. 12:14.

The feast lasted seven days. That and the passover are distinct, but the feast is founded on the passover, and it is the feast of the passover. The passover is an accomplished fact. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." The feast is not an accomplished fact. We are keeping it now. It won't be an accomplished fact until we get into the land. When we get to heaven, we shall have gotten through with the feast of the passover. How happy it would be for us, beloved brethren, if we realized more fully that the present dispensation for the Christian is the feast of the passover. The Church of God is keeping two of the seven feasts now. It is keeping the feast of the passover and the feast of Pentecost. The feast of Pentecost began in the 2nd of Acts, the coming of the Holy Spirit.

In the 16th of Deuteronomy we find three feasts separated from the seven which are given in other parts of Scripture. Those three are the feast of the passover, the feast of Pentecost, and the feast of Tabernacles at the end of the year. The Church is keeping the feast of the passover and Pentecost, and is going to keep the feast of Tabernacles. The feast of Tabernacles is a feast characterized by two things: rest and joy. All God's people, earthly and heavenly, will keep the feast of Tabernacles together. It is a feast characterized by rest and joy, and remembrance of God's ways with us.

In the days of Nehemiah, after the remnant returned from the captivity, when there was a happy returning to the Word of God, they kept the feast of Tabernacles, but they did it according to God in a way it had never been kept since the days of Joshua. These people went up the mountains and brought down branches of trees and made themselves tents-a practical reminder of God's ways with them. I think that beautiful. Since the days of Joshua it had not been done. Not that they had not kept the feast since then, but not in that way, getting away from all comforts and all that.

Redemption

Exod. 12

Then in Exod. 2:8-10 we get instructions as to what was to be done with the lamb whose life had been given. They were to eat it. What is eating, for instance, eating the flesh of the Son of man, and drinking His blood? To eat a thing, physically, it becomes a part of ourselves. So faith appropriates the death of Christ. Not only sheltered by the blood, but the soul enjoying the One whose blood shelters it.

In Exod. 12 we get who was to eat the passover, and how it was to be eaten; and in Deut. 16:2, where it was to be eaten. In 1 Cor. 5:7 we read, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." No unconverted person can truly keep the passover-feed upon the death of Christ in the consciousness of being sheltered by the blood.

We are told how they were to eat it in Exod. 12:11; "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded." We might begin with the 8th verse: "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof." How beautiful that is!-typical, you know. "And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's passover." There we get the how.

Why "not... raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire"? Because it is typical of Christ, the Lamb of God enduring the fire of God's judgment without any mitigation. No water came between the victim and the fire. The head-intelligence; legs-ways; the purtenance affections. All perfect, and the soul feeds on that. The affections of Christ devoted to God. "That which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire." How do you understand that? The feeding on the victim must not be too far separated from its death. All are intimately connected. You get it in the peace offering and the lamb of consecration. It is a very solemn thing for this day. The worship of God's people is now often so far separated from the cross of Christ the ground of worship. Take some popular hymns (I am not finding fault, only calling attention to it), how much do we find in them about the death of Christ for atonement of sin? We have to go back to the old ones for that. How sweetly Watts comes out on that, in:

"Not all the blood of Beasts,
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away its stain.
"But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Took all our guilt away,
A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they.

"Our souls look back to see
The burden Thou didst bear,
When hanging on the accursed tree,
For all our guilt was there."

"Alas, and did my Savior bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head,
For such a worm as I?"

"Was it for crimes that I have done,
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! Grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!"

"Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut His glories in,
When the Incarnate Maker died
For man, His creature's sin."

One almost envies that devotedness. That is what I believe we have in "let nothing remain until the morning." They could not gather manna today for tomorrow, except on the sixth day. Then they could gather for two days. If they did that any other day, and kept it over, it bred worms and stank. Every morning and every evening there was the lamb of the burnt offering, and on the Sabbath two. That is, God, in that typical people, that earthly redeemed people, kept ever before Him the coming death of Christ, as the ground of His relationship with them.

The 11th verse looks like they were prepared to depart. "Thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand." What would that bring before us, eating in that way? How long is the Christian supposed to be in this world? The Christian position is to be ever ready to leave. He has not to gird his loins and put his shoes on, but, "Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord"- waiting for that word to depart.

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." It is an accomplished sacrifice, the Paschal Lamb. "Therefore let us keep the feast" etc. The point in Corinthians is this: The feast is to be kept in consistency with this truth, that Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. What is not consistent with that, is not to be allowed.

Then we are told where they were to eat, in Deut. 16:2: "In the place which the Lord shall choose to place His name there." And for believers in our day, how important it is to keep in mind the Lord's words in Matt. 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I

in the midst of them."

Redemption of Purchased Possession

The earth, as well as man, is the subject of redemption. It is already purchased and by-and-by, in due season, it shall be rescued or delivered. That is, it is the subject of the twofold redemption known in Scripture-redemption by price, and redemption by power.

The Lord has already purchased the field, for we read in Matt. 13 that the man who found the treasure in the field went and sold all that he had and bought the field; and verse 38 speaks of the field as "the world." He has also purchased everything in it, but the unbeliever does not own the Lord's right of purchase (2 Pet. 2:1). His death and bloodshedding was the price He paid, and it can be called "the purchased possession."

But though purchased, it is not yet delivered. It is still under "the bondage of corruption" (Rom. 8:21). It is redeemed by purchase, but not as yet by power. We, therefore, wait for the "redemption" of that which is already a "purchased possession."

This bright and happy truth, this mystery found among the mysteries of God has (as well as others) had its pledges and foreshadowings.

The ordinance of the Jubilee seems to set forth this twofold redemption-by price and by power. See Lev. 25, for that chapter teaches us that at any time during forty-nine years, the alienated possession of an Israelite might have been purchased by the kinsman of the heir, and thus redeemed or brought back to the family to which, under God, it had belonged; but if that were not done, it would return to the heir in the fiftieth year, or the Jubilee, without purchase.

Again I say, these two ordinances seem to set forth the mystery I am speaking of-redemption by money and redemption by power. The kinsman might redeem with money; the Jubilee would redeem without money, by virtue of its own title, by virtue of that force or authority imparted to it by Him who was the God of Israel and the Lord of the soil. We ourselves wait to be redeemed by power. The Lord's coming will do that.

Again, Jeremiah the prophet was commanded to purchase the field of Hanameel, his uncle's son. He did so in the spirit and obedience of faith, though at that moment the Chaldean army was in the land, and was under commission from the Lord to tread it down and waste it, or possess themselves of it. But when Jeremiah made inquiry respecting this strange thing, that he should be asked to lay out his money upon a piece of land thus devoted to the sword of an invader, the Lord tells him that a day of power was to come, and that in that land there should be redemption, and that the Lord's own people should possess it again, brought back out of the hand of every spoiler. That was the Lord's answer to His servant. And thus Jeremiah had reason to know that the purchase now made by good money of the merchant, should be made good in a coming day of power. (See Jer. 32.)

And let me add one other notice of this distinguished case, the purchase of Hanameel's field, for it has interested me. On this occasion Jeremiah said to the Lord, "There is nothing too hard for

Thee"; while the Lord challenged Sarah in Gen. 18 with the question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Sarah did not know how she, whose body was then dead, could have a child, for she knew not the resurrection strength of God. Jeremiah did not know how he, who was laying out his money on a piece of ground which was then as in the hand of the enemy, could get its value back again; for, like Sarah, he knew not the resurrection strength of God.

That strength makes all simple. The victory of Christ, the resurrection of Jesus, gives us sure rights to our inheritance, under the seal of a title deed easy to be read.

Rest

"This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest" (Isa. 28:12). Are you content to be "toiling in rowing," distressed by the waves? Is that your conception of God's best for His own? Is this the "perfect peace" which He gives to His blood bought people?

Ah! let us not wrong Him with our heavy thoughts. Whatever the Savior does, He does magnificently, and what He wants He is ready to empower for. Why then should your life be dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon when you might continue to enjoy and reflect the very presence of the Prince of Love? "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." Isa. 26:3.

Return

"Return." This is God's own special word to the backslider. Return in full confession, in self-judgment, and in the fullest confidence in the boundless, changeless love of the heart of Christ. Do not keep away in the distance of your own unbelief. Do not measure the heart of Jesus by your own thoughts. Let Him tell you what is in His heart toward you.

The River of His Grace

Think - if these two thoughts had by the Holy Spirit got hold of your souls: "I am in God hidden in Christ," and, "All the springs of grace and peace are in God for me," - God causing the river of His grace to flow through all your circumstances. It is a deep subject of confession when it is not so. If we do not find the water gushing out for our need, it is because we have forsaken the living fountain for broken cisterns. His ability to supply never fails.

A Saint at Marah

Beloved in the Lord: And so you have come to Marah and found the waters thereof bitter. You had learned already that the world was now but a wilderness—a dry and thirsty land with a "mighty famine," and "no water." But it seemed as if the Lord was leading you beside some desert stream, and you longed more than ever to drink. As you followed the pillar of cloud, it glistened before you and, I trust, awakened gratitude to Him who "turneth the wilderness into a standing water." But now you taste its waters and find them bitter; you cannot drink of them, and you cry to the Lord. Moses did so in Exod. 15, and allow me to remind you how the Lord answered that cry. "The Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." He did not create some fresh thing for the occasion, meeting the new difficulty by some new interposition of miraculous power; but He directed the eye of Moses to something there already on the banks of the very waters of Marah, which had the property of making the bitter sweet.

Now my beloved fellow pilgrim, what do you ask the Lord to do for you in this new trial? To create some new thing in the earth to meet your case? To bring back the darling object of which He has bereaved you, or remove at once in some other way the heavy trial that burdens your spirit and weighs you down? Is this His way? For "The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm" (Nah. 1:3). No, I will ask the Lord for you, that if they be bitter waters to which He leads you (Exod. 13:21), He will "show" you the Blessed One whose presence in love and sympathy can sweeten every bitter cup and gild the bed of death with light. No new Savior, but "Him that is from the beginning"—the "same" today as He was yesterday, and will be forever. As no new thing came down from heaven, or grew up from earth to sweeten Marah's waters for the poor thirsty wanderers, but a tree, there before the waters were tasted, which, in answer to his cry, the Lord showed unto Moses, so may the Holy Spirit who is with you and in you, magnify His blessed office by taking of the things of the Lord Jesus and showing them to you (John 16:14, 15), leading you to see and enjoy what He is to you; so that instead of Naomi becoming Marah (Ruth 1:20), Marah may become Naomi—that is, "pleasant."

Remember for your joy, "It is the Lord" who has led you beside the bitter waters—the same Shepherd who has led you in the Person of your Substitute, the Lord Jesus, clear through the Red Sea waters of death and judgment, now behind you forever—the same One who, when He sees fit, will lead you beside the still, sweet waters of Elim, an oasis in the desert, and precious foretaste of the promised rest. And if He guides you now to Marah, He has gone before you there and planted a sweetening tree within easy reach. The world may have tasted something of the bitterness of the water, and given it a name; no name is given to the healing tree, for its value they have not discovered; but the Spirit of the Lord is with you to show you not only "things to come," but also the present sufficiency and preciousness of the Lord Jesus, more than equal to your deepest need. To bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever He has said to you, how He foretold you of Marah—"In the world ye shall have tribulation"—but is Himself ever near and available as the great soother of sorrow, saying, "That in Me ye might have peace." Do not then dear.. be looking for some new token or revelation from the Lord, but that He may by His Spirit "show" you more of Him

who is "with you alway, even unto the end." Ever yours in Him,_____

The Scriptures

The Scriptures are the permanent expression of God's mind and will, furnished as such with His authority. They are His expression of His own thoughts. Not only is the truth given in them by inspiration, but they are inspired and are the standard by which every spoken word is to be judged. Does this perfect and supreme authority of the Scriptures set aside ministry? By no means; it is the foundation of ministry. One is a minister of the Word.

The Secret of the Lord

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

This is something we have to learn experimentally. It is not easy to teach it to another, because it is not a mere mental or intellectual operation. Some 27 or 28 years ago I passed through a great exercise of soul as to how I could know the Lord's will to go here or go there. I spoke of it to J.N.D. once when I met him at Alton, Illinois. The answer I got was, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." I never forgot it. And I have found since that when I could get no light, there was some cause-something in my state-or something that hindered full communion. Often there has been more or less misgiving as to whether I had His mind; but generally I have found that when any step was taken in His fear, sooner or later it became manifest that He had guided. Sometimes it is "bit and bridle"-some restraint-some hindrance- but this is where mere nature is working, or will, and the eye is not clear. And it is a mercy to be restrained rather than to have our own way. The simple, normal thing is, "I will guide thee with Mine eye" (Psalm 32:8).

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

Shoes of Iron

"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Deut. 33:25.

There is probably no scripture quoted more frequently than this for comfort and encouragement to the feeble and aged; but the question has often been raised as to its application to the saints of this dispensation. More attention to its place and context would soon give the rightful answer. It occurs in the blessing of Asher, and it contains therefore, for him-that is, for the tribe-what it could not contain for us. But, like the infinite fullness of the Word of God, it contains for us what it could not bestow on Asher. It runs, "Let Asher be blessed with children [that is, have a fruitful progeny]; let him be acceptable to his brethren [be in their favor or esteem], and let him dip his foot in oil"-a desire doubtless for his wealth in the produce of the olive.

Then follows the promise at the head of these notes. Now it is precisely in this connection, between the last clause of verse 24 and verse 25, that the truth for Christians is to be found. Oil is a well-known type of the Holy Spirit. Taking it thus, all is plain. Let the believer walk (dip his foot) in the power of the Holy Spirit, and then it may be said to him, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." So understood, the promise is exceedingly beautiful. It points out that the only power for walk is the Holy Spirit, and that His strength, however our natural powers may decline, will never fail. As thy days-long or short-so shall thy strength be, if thou dost but dip thy foot in oil.

Thy feet He'll keep

Thy footsteps guide,

Now and the whole year through.

The Solid Rock

Nothing can withstand the power of the gates of hell but the assembly of the living God, for that is built upon "the living Stone." Now the local expression of that assembly may be but "two or three" gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, a poor, feeble, despised handful.

What is the material of which the assembly is composed?

It is, in one word, those possessing salvation, or eternal life. We do not enter the assembly in order to be saved, but as those who are saved. The word is, "Upon this rock I will build My church." He does not say, On My Church I will build the salvation of souls. One of Rome's boasted dogmas is this-"There is no salvation out of the true Church." Yes, but we can go deeper still, and say, Off the true Rock there is no Church. Take away the Rock, and you have nothing but a baseless fabric of error and corruption. What a miserable delusion, to think of being saved by that! Thank God, it is not so. We do not get to Christ through the Church, but to the Church through Christ. To reverse this order is to displace Christ altogether, and thus have neither Rock nor Church nor salvation. We meet Christ as a life-giving Savior, before we have anything to say to the assembly at all.

It is important to see clearly that the materials of which God's assembly is composed are those possessing salvation, in whom is eternal life; so that whatever be the object of that assembly, it most certainly is not to provide salvation for its members, seeing that all its members are saved ere they enter it at all. God's assembly is a houseful of saved ones from one end to the other. Blessed fact! It is not an institution set on foot for the purpose of providing salvation for sinners, nor yet for providing for their religious wants. It is a saved, living body, formed and gathered by the Holy Spirit, to make known to "principalities and powers in heavenly places... the manifold wisdom of God," and to declare to the whole universe the all-sufficiency of the name of Jesus.

Now, the great enemy of Christ and the Church is well aware of what a powerful testimony the assembly of God is called and designed to yield on the earth; and therefore he has put forth all his hellish energy to quash that testimony in every possible way. He hates the name of Jesus, and everything tending to glorify that name. Hence his intense opposition to the assembly as a whole, and to each local expression thereof, wherever it may exist. He has no objection to a mere religious establishment set on foot for the purpose of providing for man's religious wants, whether maintained by government or by voluntary effort. You may set up what you please. You may be what you please; anything and everything for Satan but the assembly of God, and the practical expression of it in any given place. That he hates most cordially, and will seek to blacken and blast by every means in his power. But those consolatory accents of the Lord Jesus Christ fall with divine power on the ear of faith: "On this rock I will build My assembly, and hades gates shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18; J.N.D. Trans.).

Some Mountain Top Scenes: a Short Review

Knowing as we do, how much the place has often to do with the truths unfolded in Scripture, it cannot be without interest to observe some of the scenes that the tops of the mountains have witnessed, both in former times and in the later days of New Testament revelation.

How blessed, for example, to take one's place on Ararat's summit (Gen. 8:4) at the moment when the force of the waves of judgment was abated, and the ark with its precious freight is at length able to rest in safety; and the dove can be sent forth to return with its olive branch, to tell of peace and happiness once more; and then to learn, by means of this wondrous scene, the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and its blessed results to those who make Him their ark of refuge.

Dear reader, can you say, This portion is mine, and I can see that every billow of the judgment that was rightly due to me has rolled over the head of that precious One that came to be my ark of safety, and now in resurrection He has borne me up and placed me beyond the reach of condemnation?-I can look back and say the time of wrath is over, and the time of peace and happiness has come?-the Holy Spirit bears witness to me of this?-and I can now erect my altar and send up the incense of praise into my Father's ears, while His bow in the clouds tells me of security as eternal as Himself? Surely it is well to ponder this ere we pass on to the not less interesting scene of Gen. 22

The time had come for Abraham's faith to be tested, and God demands his only son from him. How beautiful to see the un murmuring, unselfish surrender of his all to the will of God-his patient journey, his simple faith, and Isaac's willing obedience to, and childlike acquiescence in, his father's will. One scarcely knows which to admire most-the simple trust of Abraham, or the docile willingness of Isaac. We know the story, how, when given up to God, the respite came, and henceforth Isaac is a resurrection child. But how much more precious does this scene become when we regard it as a truthful picture of God's willing surrender of His only begotten Son, and that blessed One's submission to His Father's will. Not three days alone, but three and thirty years did their journey last, and then to find no respite from the stroke of judgment. Not the less painful for the one to inflict than for the other to endure. But love sustained both Father and Son, and together they return to us as witnesses that eternal happiness is theirs who own the Lamb of God's providing.

If we have in any measure apprehended the meaning of the mountain scenes already glanced at, we shall not be afraid to go with Moses to the top of Sinai (Exod. 19) and hear the blessed revelations God had to make to him. He was beyond the reach of the voices and thunderings and lightnings that made the people tremble. He was with God and in His presence at perfect ease. How blessed then to hear type after type unfolding the glories and excellencies of Jesus, and to learn in the light the shadows that certainly, though dimly, point to Him that was yet to come. Was there a slave whose devotedness was such that when his period of service was completed, would not go out free, but in love to his master, wife, and children, remained a slave forever? (Exod. 21) Jesus was the One alluded to. For our sakes He took a servant's place, and in perfect love, His

earthly service over, devotes Himself to our cause though absent from us; and when He comes again, will not even then remit the exercises of His heart in our behalf (John 13; Luke 12).

The ark of the covenant, too, has its tale to tell of the glory of His Person; the manifestation of the Godhead; the One in whom all fullness pleased to dwell; where mercy and truth are met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other; while the table of showbread and candlestick speak respectively of the glories of His perfect humanity in connection with His people, and the light He ever bears on their behalf during the time even of their grossest darkness. Not less do the tabernacle and veil tell of His glories as God manifest in flesh, whether seen as Messiah, Son of man, or Son of God, or in all the varied graces ever displayed in Him; while Aaron's clothing and appointment not less plainly unfold to us a priesthood of a higher and a heavenly order; and the incense altar and the laver of brass likewise speak of Him who ever lives and makes intercession for us, and while He does so, sanctifies us by the washing of water by the Word. Surely this is a blessed mountain scene, and one that well repays a visit of less brief duration than that we have just accorded to it.

Let us pass on now to another place and stand with Balaam and Balak on the high places of Baal (Numb. 23; 24) and hear what God has to say concerning the people of His choice. Peacefully they were resting in their tents below while God and Satan were waging war concerning them above. Satan had failed to hinder their departure from Egypt, and now he will not suffer them to enter the land without a contest; but, as is ever the case, his opposition only tends to bring out more fully the counsels of God's grace on their behalf. Separated unto God were they, beyond the reach of Satan's power, taken out from the masses of the human family, to be a peculiar people, a holy nation to Jehovah. Perverse they had been in all their ways and abundant in their transgressions, but a God of perfect love can yet refrain from beholding iniquity in Jacob or perverseness in Israel. Beautiful to Him likewise were they, as seen in their pilgrim character, grouped in all the perfect order of His own arrangement; and possessed of hopes of which the world knew nothing, no less than the coming of Him whose scepter should rule the universe until all enemies were subject under His feet. How blessedly does this fourfold prophecy concerning Israel suggest to us our own position in the sight of God. The special subjects of Satan's hostility, but the peculiar objects of the Father's care. We, too, are a people separated unto Him-chosen in the Son of His love before the world's foundation. He can see us from the heights of His own counsels and maintain our cause accordingly. Of us, too, it is said, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" for "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified." Our standing is not less certain than our calling; and this, blessed be God, not by our works, but because of the purpose of Him that calls. Then, too, we have our beauty and order in His sight-accepted in the Beloved-the expression to principalities and powers in heavenly places of the manifold wisdom of God, we are seen as the epistle of Christ-known and read of all men; and this, until the promise dear to every one of us is fulfilled, and the hope of our hearts, the bright and morning star appears to change our mourning into gladness, and the tears of midnight into the day-beams of His own presence. Surely the "top of the rocks," the "high places of Baal" are well deserving of our attention, whether as unfolding the privileges of the ancient people of God, or as revealing in figure our own more favored heavenly calling.

Let us pass on to another and a different scene. The days of Israel's prosperity have passed away. Moses and Joshua, David and Solomon, have gone to their rest, and the people's testimony has been less and less apparent for the Lord, though His love for them had in no wise lessened; and though Ahab's wickedness exceeded that of all his predecessors, still the Lord had preserved a witness in the person of Elijah. And now the moment had come (1 Kings 18) to test the people's faithfulness, and Elijah stood alone as the representative of God on Carmel's summit in antagonism to the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 that ate at Jezebel's table. What a scene it is! Like Moses on a former occasion (Exod. 32), he thought only of Jehovah's glory. Having gained strength "in the sanctuary," he is calm and confident when "in the sea," and before all Israel he rebuilds, and according to the due order, the ruined altar of the Lord; and a blessed answer did his faith receive, for Jehovah maintains the honor of His name, and the sacrifice is burned to ashes, and once more the people bow their hearts in the presence of the display of the Lord's majesty. Surely this picture, too, may bring before our minds what God expects of us in the present day. It is true, alas, that collective order has been displaced by admixture with the world and consequent failure in testimony, but only the more brightly to display the tender mercy of God in the faithfulness of the twos and threes that He has gathered around the Person of His Son. They, too, have learned that the secret of power without the camp must come from constancy within the veil, and thus, too, their strength in God; they are not afraid to confront the masses that swell the ranks of a profession that is fast ripening into open apostasy. They, too, can own no altar but the Lord, and no circle of unity but that of the one body joined by the one Spirit; and they also have found out the truth of the Lord's faithfulness, and know not merely that their sacrifices are acceptable, but that Jesus, according to His Word, is in their midst; and thus encouraged, they stand their ground as in the place of testimony for Him until He comes again to bring them to Himself in glory.

Some Mountain Top Scenes: a Short Review

Not only is the Old Testament rich in mountain scenes of varied interest and instruction, but the New likewise contains its own unfolding of everything that feeds the soul and fills the heart. Take, for example, the transfiguration scene in the holy mount. What can be alike more beautiful and instructive than this? No longer types and shadows are before us, and saints and holy men of old the principal actors in the scene, but Christ Himself. God manifest in flesh is now the central figure in the picture. Clothed in robes of kingly beauty, white and glistening, the sun itself is the only light that can be found wherewith to compare His glory. He is seen as the world will yet behold Him when He reigns in triumph as the Son of man. Neither is He alone; for talking with Him, also glorified, are seen two heavenly saints, whose history indicates to us that they typify those who will share His heavenly glories. One had passed through death to be with Christ; the other was translated straight from earth to heaven, and now they are seen in company with Jesus to foreshadow the vast company of heavenly citizens that, when He comes, will together rise to meet and reign with Him (1 Thess. 4:15-17). Peter and his fellows, too, beholding but not sharing the glory, with equal certainty depict to us the earthly company who will behold though not enter into the happiness of their more privileged forerunners. No wonder, with their Jewish instincts, they trembled as the well-known cloud was entered by the Lord and His companions—a blessed indication to us of how we shall not merely share His glory as Son of man, but be privileged also to behold His glory as the eternal Son of God (John 17:22-24). While until He comes we have the Father's voice to tell us that His beloved Son (and not Moses and Elias) is the One whose Person

is to fix our eye, and whose word is to attract our ears, and thus secure our obedience.

What a different scene is now before us as we ascend the Mount of Olives with the Man of Sorrows and His disciples. The prince of this world driven away and worsted from the temptation in the wilderness, will now appear again to try and draw through fear of death God's faithful Son from the path that led to victory. Sorrowful, even unto death, amazed and very heavy was He, as He knelt and fell upon His face in prayer; and so great was His agony as He offered up His supplications with strong crying and tears, that His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. His disciples might sleep under the weight of their sorrow, but He continued agonizing, while still perfectly submissive to His Father's will. Well might He suffer, and because of suffering pray. When thus bereft of earthly comforters, an angel only strengthening Him, while yet in perfect communion with His Father, Satan thrust upon Him all the fearful consequences of the position He had taken as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. The martyr's, and still worse, the victim's sufferings in utter separation from God, rose up before Him in all their fearful intensity, and hence the deep-and the more deep because of His absolute perfectness-exercises of soul He passed through. At length the conflict ceases, the cup is taken from the Father's hand (John 18:11) and held fast in faithfulness until the moment came to drain it to the bottom. What scenes of interest are these, and how worthy of our deepest study!

But Calvary, too, demands our notice as Jesus once more is seen the central figure of the landscape. Rejected of men, deserted by His disciples, yet in patient love He treads with unflinching footsteps the lonely road that led to death and judgment. The tears of the sympathizing women; the indifference of the populace; the scorn of those in authority; the insulting conduct of the brutal soldiery, and the blasphemy of the unrepentant malefactor alike fail to move that One whose perfectness was only more distinctly visible as the pressure from without became the more intense against Him. In calm dependence on His God and Father, though feeling most intensely, and the more intensely because divinely, all that was against Him, yet completely superior to it, He can tell the women of their danger; He can pour out His soul in intercession for His murderers; He can breathe words of comfort to the dying thief; He can think of His mother's lonely heart, and entrust her to His loved disciple; and then, God's righteous judgment over, can commend His spirit to His Father's care. Truly this, of all the mountain scenes we have glanced at, is one of deepest moment.

But once more the Mount of Olives, so often the blessed Lord's resort while here, and witness to so many occasions of interest, comes before us as the place where He ascended to His present place of glory; and surely here, too, we may pause a little to note what passed at that eventful time. Again and again had He appeared to assure the hearts of His faltering disciples during the forty days that intervened between His resurrection and His departure to His Father's throne, and now the moment had come for Him to take His leave of them. Then, as ever, was His people's cause His care. Assured they were that His absence should only pave the way for a far higher order of blessing than they had hitherto enjoyed. Henceforth the heavens should be opened to them, and the Holy Ghost should dwell with them, to fill their souls with Him whose Person now garnished the heavenlies as He had before adorned the earth. Henceforth Messiah's kingdom should, as to their thoughts, be merged in the far superior glory of the Son of man's dominions, while they themselves should take their place as those, and we with them, who form a portion of the mystic man, the body of Christ, the Church of God, the bride. Surely then, though His

departure must cause a blank that His return alone could fill, there was in the measure of blessing accorded in exchange for what they had renounced, far more than enough to compensate for their apparent present loss. A cloud received Him out of their sight, but soon a present Holy Ghost becomes their Comforter and ours, and fills our souls with the unnumbered glories of the Son of God.

But one more mountain scene I propose to turn to. It is that unfolded in Rev. 21:9-22:5, where the bride, the Lamb's wife, is seen descending in all her given glory as the Church of God. How beautiful she is, and what a contrast to that which bears her name at present. Her name is Peace (Jerusalem), as with heavenly features, and of God's creation, she is seen descending. His glory is hers. Eternally glorious, and characteristic features of the new man (Eph. 4:24) are seen in her ways and throughout her internal structure; while from her foundations to her gates the precious stones and pearls bear testimony to the fact that she is now God's own reflection; and dear as ever to the heart of Christ (Matt. 13); and best of all, no temple now obscures the unveiled glory of creation's, patriarch's, and Israel's God and our Lord Jesus, but they are seen as the center, and at the same time the light and glory. How refreshing to turn away from the weakness and failure everywhere around us to such a scene as this; and as the Bridegroom tells us, "Surely I come quickly" to reply, "Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The Source of Blessing

Can you trace the gospel to the heart of God? If not, you have not reached the source. Is the cross the source of blessing? No, the cross stands a long way down the story. If you had not the love of God, you could never have had the cross of Christ. The blood is your only title to blessing. But how did you get the blood? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. Your response to the gospel should be, "Out of Thine own heart Thou didst it. Thy bosom was the birthplace of this grace, the birthplace of all blessing."

The Source of Blessing

Can you trace the gospel to the heart of God? If not, you have not reached the source. Is the cross the source of blessing? No, the cross stands a long way down the story. If you had not the love of God, you could never have had the cross of Christ. The blood is your only title to blessing. But how did you get the blood? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. Your response to the gospel should be, "Out of Thine own heart Thou didst it. Thy bosom was the birthplace of this grace, the birthplace of all blessing."

The Star

"The morning star" is the symbol of the Church's hope. And there is beauty in this thought, derived as it is from Rev. 2:28 and 22:16.

The characteristics of the morning star are brilliancy and solitariness. It glitters beautifully off in its distant sphere, but it is all alone. It does not command the notice of the world as the sun does. It is only the watchman that sees it. The season for its appearing is quite its own-it is neither night nor day. It fills a moment that is quite its own, and it is only the watchman or the child of the morning, the one that is up before the sun, that has to do with it.

Is there not a voice in this, dear Christian? Does it not tell your inmost soul of a coming that is to precede the sunrise-of the appearing of One who does not belong to the world, whose business is not with the earth, but with an elect people who wait for an unearthly Savior?

The Strait Gate

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Luke 13:24.

Some people have made a difficulty over the words, "shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." The true solution I believe lies not in the difference of striving and seeking, on which some have rested unduly, and others so mistakenly as in effect to make men their own saviors, but rather in this, that while many will seek to enter in, it is not at the strait gate but by some method of human device. The natural heart dislikes God and God's way, and it easily deceives itself into a vague reliance on mercy without righteousness, which is an infidel thought, or into a vain confidence in religious ordinances, which is a superstitious one; in either way, man is lost. People might like to enter the kingdom, but not by repentance and faith in Christ.

Success

Josh. 1:6-8; Phil. 3:1-15

The Apostle opens this third chapter of Philippians with the reminder that he was writing the same things to them; for him it was not grievous; for them it was safe. That is, he was having to repeat himself, and he didn't consider it out of the way, because it was safe for them.

I sometimes have wondered in connection with the little talks we have had with the young people that after all, they amount to a good deal the same line of things, and if one didn't have scriptural sanction for repetition, perhaps he would not be encouraged to consider the same line of things. People in all ages meet with the same problems in life, and have the same difficulties and the same decisions to make. God's Word is the only solution of the difficulties for the Christian.

In addressing you this afternoon on the subject of "success," I am not supposed to be addressing those in their sins and outside of Christ, but those who have confessed the Lord Jesus as Savior and Lord, and to such the subject of success is a very vital one. One carefully looked up that word "success," and found it to be a very rare word in the Bible. I have not been able to find it but in the one passage in Josh. 1 suppose it is a word found very frequently in the vocabulary of the present day. There was never a day when that line of things was more pressed upon the young than now. In order that their lives might be lived in a way to contribute to their own encouragement and the good of society, they must make what the world terms a "success." If we are to be guided by worldly standards and ideals, we will live a different life from that mapped out for young Christians in the Word of God; and it is to contrast these two standards-the ideals of the Word of God, and the ideals of the world about us-I wish to speak now.

You hear someone referred to in the world; one of the questions generally asked about him is as to his standing or accomplishments, and one of the requisites to a satisfactory answer is to be able to say, "He has made quite a success." If that question is answered satisfactorily, there is a sigh of relief. That is thought to be essential. In the world, we know success consists in having accumulated a certain amount of property or monies. A man who can write his name at the bottom of a check, and perhaps that check tells its story in six or seven figures-that one is, in the eyes of the world, a success. Here is another man kept busy going about looking after his interests-various properties. The world points at him and says of him, "He is a successful citizen." Another one has not accumulated so much, but is a great political leader. The world pays tribute to him. In each case these men have lived in such a way as to place themselves in an enviable position in this world, and others look at them and say, "That is fine; I wouldn't mind being him myself." That is what the world terms success. If you get a group of old school graduates together, who have been separated many years, they begin asking about this one and that one. The prime factor before all is to go over the list and find out how each has gotten along in the world. I have heard that so many times. "What do you hear about Charlie?" "He went out West and went into the lumber business and has a thriving big concern in Seattle. He has done fine." Everyone feels satisfied, and Charlie's success reflects favorably on themselves. You find that all around. It is natural for us

to be affected by these things, and we feel under some sort of moral obligation to match up to it-to come up to the standard acknowledged all around us.

When we face that line of things with the Word of God as the measuring stick-taking the Word of God into account-how different everything is going to appear. This criterion-this standard- never fails to tell the truth. God's Word is the only standard by which you and I can judge these matters. If you get hold of a faulty one, how can your conclusions help being faulty? I will just refer to a little recent experience to illustrate that. It is only a humble thing, but I believe it illustrates the point. I wanted a new pipe for my furnace. I took a measurement of the old pipe and it came out exactly a 10-inch pipe. I ordered the pipe, and when it appeared it didn't fit at all, and I had a rather pointed argument with the one from whom I purchased it and we couldn't agree. I was baffled; I was so positive I was right. I found someone had cut an inch off the yardstick I used to take the measurement. I had the wrong standard. My conclusions were wrong, though I was absolutely sure I was right. So it is in measuring what is called worldly success. What is the standard you are using?

In the third chapter of Philippians we have a man who started out with a worldly standard in view, and then he received a sudden spiritual shock that caused him to change right about face. He adopted a new standard from that time to the day of his death that revolutionized his whole life. I believe it will do the same in its measure for any of us who are willing to make the exchange Saul of Tarsus made when he started on that journey to Damascus with the papers in his pocket to bring to Jerusalem to be punished any who called upon the Lord's name. What kind of a man was he in the eyes of the world? I suppose he had almost everything a man in the world values and covets. We get a list of things here beginning at the 4th verse. What a splendid lineage that is! -something to be proud of-splendid breeding. "An Hebrew of the Hebrews"-that is true blue blood. "As touching the law, a Pharisee"; that is his standing in the community; the Pharisees were at the top notch religiously. "Concerning zeal"-there is energy-"persecuting the church." "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." There is reputation. In his case there was not only reputation but character, too. What is he going to do with a start like that? How few get a start like that-a backing like that! Cast it overboard! Have a wholesale housecleaning and start over again! Just listen to what he says: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." What a change that was! It takes the mighty power of faith to enable a man to do that. He had seen the Lord in glory. He had experienced that light above the brightness of the sun at noonday, and that was a vision that never faded; it was ever present before him and in view of that, he could cast all away and say, "Those I counted loss for Christ."

It takes faith for people to cast away things that are gain to them. There are some things we can easily cast away and are better off for it. I have seen young men quit evil habits-drinking and smoking. Those are things it is good to get rid of, but you couldn't say that was casting away something that was gain to you. The Apostle said, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Are we able by the grace of God to take those very things that minister to our temporal advantage in this world, and count them as Paul did, refuse, that we might win Christ? That is true faith. That is the energy of divine faith at work in the soul. That is what is going to make a successful man. I believe if there ever was a case within the covers of the Bible that could be termed a success from God's viewpoint, it was the Apostle Paul. When he got to the end of his career, in place of having a great harvest of regrets and remorse, he is just satisfied to look back

with humble satisfaction, conscious in his soul that he had fought a good fight, kept the faith and finished his course, and that there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, would give him.

Dear friends, that crown is not for Paul alone, but He will give it to all who love His appearing; and surely, don't you love His appearing? If you are a child of God at all, you cannot help rejoicing as you look forward to the time when the Lord Jesus is going to appear in glory and come into possession of all that is His by right and title. He is rejected now; He is not getting His rights; He is the maligned and outcast One. We feel that; we suffer with Christ; we feel He is not getting what belongs to Him, but we look forward to the time when He is going to have what belongs to Him. His joy in that day will be ours. Paul was able to finish his course with that satisfaction in his soul that he had kept the faith and had fought the good fight.

We sometimes get young people who feel in some way or other that they have been endowed in a superior way. I met a young man not long ago who as much as told me that he was a little different from others because he had come into a superior mental endowment and he couldn't afford to take up a path of reproach in this world; that might be all right for one of more mediocre attainment. For him, it seemed a loss-a shame-to step aside and disown all this remarkable attainment and live a humble life for Christ. I don't say he put it in those words, but I couldn't help feeling that was the burden that was going on in his own mind. I don't dispute his claims for endowment. I think he was a clever young man. Perhaps such is the attitude of some here. I was thinking of what we have in 1 Cor. 4:7 in that connection: "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" Young Christian here this afternoon, are you among those favored ones who have received something superior in the way of mental equipment or capacity? Where did you get it? How many times have you congratulated yourself on having it? But where did you get it? "If thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory [boast]?" "Who maketh thee to differ?" It was God who gave it to you, and it is to Him you must give account for having it.

In Matthew's Gospel where the Lord gives the talents to His servants, He gives to every man according to his several ability. He didn't give the same to each man. When He came to reckon with them, He reckoned with them on that ground, too. So He is going to reckon with you on that ground. You are a steward of that with which God has endowed you. What are you going to do with it? You can use all this splendid equipment you say you have, to advance self, with each success as a stepping stone to another one, pushing on and getting to the front and to the top. You can use all this endowment for that purpose; that is, self. But what about this: "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful"? How will it be in that day when you have to give account, and the question is asked how you have used it? One came to the Lord and told Him that he had kept what was committed to him laid up in a napkin. He got the Lord's rebuke. God has given you these things to use for Him, and in that coming day is going to require it of you again.

Success

In this third chapter of Philippians again, 8th verse: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." You say, "That is rather discouraging to ambition. I must have an object in life-something for which to live." Granted; that is

true; one must have an object, but the Apostle Paul had one object torn out of his grasp on the way to Damascus, but he had another put into his hands. He laid down one to take up another. God never asks any of His own to go through life without an object. Our lives are formed largely by the character of the object we have before us, and that is never more true than in the lives of Christians. We must have an object; God knows that, and what an object He has given us! such as this poor world knows nothing of.

There are some in the world, we believe, who are living what is called an altruistic life. They have grand moral purposes to serve humanity. They are unconscious how much of self is mixed up in it, perhaps, but they feel they have dedicated themselves to a life of sacrifice and service. But for you, God has placed an Object in the form of a person, and that Person the Son of God. The Apostle could say, "The Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me." In his race in life there mingled not only the purposeful ambition, but love and affection, all bound up for the Object before him. It was not a sense of duty-not that he resolved it so-but his heart's affections were drawn out to that Object: "The Son of God who loved me."

Notice in the 8th verse, he doesn't say, "Christ Jesus the Lord," but "my Lord." The Apostle Paul had the sense in his soul that the Lord Jesus Christ was his Lord. What is that? The One who had absolute authority over his life.

Dear friends, it is a blessed thing to have a Savior, but do you realize that you have a Lord, and that that One who is our Lord, has the right to demand all of us-not on terms of legal obedience but because of what He has done for us? "The Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Doesn't He have the right to the very best we have? Shall we hold anything back from Him? Shall we not sum up all we have-the best we have-ambitions and desires-and take them all and lay them at His feet and say, "My Lord"? Thomas made that confession: "My Lord and my God." If we bring all to Him and put all into His hand and say, "Now, Lord Jesus, I have turned all over to Thee; Thou shalt be the one purpose of my life," do you think a life lived with that sense in the soul can be a failure? Dear young Christian, it cannot be possible; it is bound to be a success.

I have often told about a young woman in Hamilton, Ontario, crippled and blind. Is she a success? Go with us some day into her room in the hospital, and as we speak about the Lord Jesus, witness the smile of joy that comes over her face, and hear her speak in terms of affection about Him. Her whole soul is alive to the name of the Lord Jesus. Is that girl a success? Is her life a success or is it a failure? At one time she was enjoying health, and was training to be a nurse; there she lies now, a hopeless cripple, a helpless invalid at the mercy of others. But has God made things in His Word so hard that it is necessary to have health and strength to be a success? That would be cruel. No; He has made it so that even an invalid who cannot lift a hand or open an eye, can be a brilliant success. We hear that expression in the world, "He was a brilliant success." I believe as the Lord Jesus looks down on that poor girl, confined for the rest of her days (she has been there now 10 years), He can truly say, "a brilliant success." I am only citing this to show how God views things here. If we believe the Word of God, we must believe all things here are coursing on to one thing: judgment is ahead. This world has been judged at the cross of Christ; and what a poor place to display oneself in-a scene where the blessed Son of God was cast out and rejected, and where His name is blasphemed to this day. What place has He in the world's affairs-its counsels and schemes? You know Christ has no place in it at all. If you are ambitious to have your name

heralded here, what a hollow ambition it is! Is this the place to cherish and nourish—even to permit—such an ambition in your breast? Can we not say with real energy of soul, I am content to count all that loss for Christ—count it refuse—"that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness... but... the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Paul speaks here in the 10th verse: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings," etc. How the world worships power these days! Here is the mighty power of God that raised Christ from the dead. That is a power you are to share. Christ is no longer in the grave; He is no longer in humiliation, but is risen by the mighty power of God from the grave, and all things are become new—a new beginning. God began things all over again when He raised Christ from the dead. That is where you and I are to start, with the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

What does that mean for the old desires and ambitions? Put them in the place of death. "Being made conformable unto His death."

"O worldly pomp and glory,

Your charms are spread in vain."

Have we said farewell to all those worldly desires and ambitions; have we put them to death? We have a life in association with Christ in resurrection, and are partakers now of His sufferings. In that coming day we are going to be partakers of His glory. If only we could get this thing lined up and see the advantages that would be ours from casting in our lot with Him! Moses did. He looked forward and "chose to suffer affliction... because he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." He was looking forward to pay day at the end of the course. He wasn't a loser. There he is on the mount sharing the glory of Christ.

One longs to put this in such a way that it might arrest the hearts of our young people. Some of them are slipping away; some of them are drifting with the tide, feeling that they might be in this world, and saying, "Can I afford to have a hidden life? Can I afford to settle down and be nobody in this world?" Sad to say, some have made the wrong decision, have turned their backs upon Christ as their Object and refused conformity to Christ in death. It is sad; it is actually happening.

I wonder if there are some here who have things in the balances. Dear friends, if you have Christ as your Object, you will never, never be disappointed. There never has been such a thing as disappointment at the end of a life that has had Christ as its Object; but if you have something less than Christ, you are surely going to get disappointment sooner or later.

Just one more reading of that verse in Joshua in closing: "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 thou shalt have good success."

If you want a recipe for success, there it is. That "book of the law" for you is the Word of God, and that promise stands as good today as when made to Josh. 1 can say far better than when made to Joshua, because we have the thing made far more sure. We have the revelation of God in Christ, and every assurance that if we make Christ first, we will have a prosperous way and we will have good success. So don't for a moment imagine that a life for Christ means failure. It can't mean

failure. A life for this world must mean failure in the end, in view of that day. I would press it upon you young people, by the grace of God to lay hold on Christ as your Object; make this book, the Word of God, that by which you live and have your being, and you will have good success.

The Syrian Leper

What do we see in Naaman? A man with all sorts of earthly good; captain of the hosts of the king of Syria—a great man with his master-honorable, too, because that by him the Lord had given victory and deliverance to Syria.

Was not his cup full? Had not he all that heart could wish? Was he not satisfied with all this profusion of earthly good? No, "he was a leper." There was that in his lot which spoiled all the rest. He had this, and that, and the other, but - ah! there was a "but" at the end of all, and such an one as to hinder him from enjoying anything he did possess. "But he was a leper."

What a poor, unsatisfactory portion is this world, where those "ifs" and "buts" have the power of spoiling all. So it must be where sin is, where the curse rests. The very ground is cursed for man's sin; and how can happiness be expected from anything which appertains to a creation lying under the curse. Naaman had almost everything to minister to his enjoyment, "but he was a leper."

There is deeper instruction for us here, however, than this. Leprosy, in scripture, is typical of sin. It is not only that the fruit of sin, some mishap or calamity, prevents your happiness; there is sin itself. Man is a sinner. And observe, it was not that Naaman had a spot here and a spot there; a boil in one part and a scab on another. He was a leper; that was his condition. The disease was inherent in his system, in his constitution. The physicians could not cure him; there was no human remedy for his disease. And such is our condition spiritually before God. Sin is not like a boil or a wound which may cause a little derangement for the time and then pass away. It is inherent in our nature, and cleaves to and infects and defiles our whole being. We are sinners by nature. Adam, when he had fallen, begat a son in his own likeness, and he again in his, and so it has continued to the present time. We are all by nature children of wrath.

What was the effect of leprosy? In Israel, where God dwelt, and where His presence in holy government constituted the basis of the whole social structure, leprosy (type of sin) excluded the person defiled by it from all the ordinances of the sanctuary, and from all fellowship with God's people. To come in contact with a leper was to be defiled. In consequence, the leper was excluded from among the habitations of his brethren. If it was in the wilderness, he was put outside the camp—if in the land, he was put outside the city; and so completely was all communication with him forbidden, that if any one chanced to approach, he had to proclaim his own shame and warn the other, by crying "Unclean, Unclean." And everything he touched, even to the garments he wore, the seat he sat upon, and the vessel he drank out of, was unclean. What a picture of man's condition as a sinner! Whatever the sinner may think of himself, he is in God's sight a loathsome mass of corruption, utterly unfit for His presence or for any place among His people. Would that we saw ourselves as God sees us! Then surely we should welcome the tidings of deliverance by His grace.

That They May Know My Service

In the school of God the courses are good and they are varied. We do not graduate here. Our God is also our Father who teaches in effective ways of love, tailored to each one of us individually. Sometimes He teaches us by His statements of truth which we cannot experience in any other way. We must accept it just because He has said it. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Heb. 11:3). "He that bath received His testimony bath set to his seal that God is true." John 3:33.

Sometimes He teaches us by examples. We are encouraged to relate ourselves to someone found in the Scriptures, or to some set of circumstances found therein. Here, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ outshines all. He often said, "Follow Me." And the inspired writers encourage us in countless ways to follow Him. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Phil. 2:5. "Ye should follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). We are also encouraged to follow those who walked with God-"whose faith follow" (Heb. 13:7).

But sometimes our wise Teacher lets us learn by experience. Either we are too dull to learn by His other methods, or He knows we can be more blessed by this manner. Often it is to teach by contrasts. Such was the case of God's people in 2 Chron. 12:6-8. It is this meditation that forms the title above. "Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know My service" (v. 8). Here they were permitted to experience the rigors imposed upon them by an unloving master so that when delivered they could appreciate better the service of a loving God. God wants us to learn His heart. He is for us!

Soon our "school" days will be over. We shall be glad to have learned the fullness of His loving and patient ways with us. And, as we see in Psalm 150, the backward look will be to His eternal praise.

Transportation

Ways of transportation are often difficult and wearisome and almost always expensive. Transportation to another world will be quickly accomplished, and with ease, and no money will be required: "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." John 14:3. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thess. 4:16-18.

Treasure in Earthen Vessels

Read 2 Cor. 4

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

What characterizes a man is what his mind is on, and then all his ways flow from that. The Apostle says that we "in this tabernacle do groan being burdened;" that is principally all we have of this world. The Lord uses it as an occasion of His dealings with us, but He does not take that up until salvation is settled.

Redemption being settled, we find difficulties and exercises come in; and the Apostle gives us here and in chapter 12 what the principle and power of his walk were. What we are called to is the manifestation of the life of Christ. Your whole life should be nothing but that. God is revealed, we have life, and the Holy Spirit is our power. We are set here as the epistles of Christ, for men to read. While waiting for Christ to manifest Himself in glory, we are to manifest Him in grace. It is not pleasant to "do well, and suffer for it"; but is not that what Christ did? It is what we have to do in lowliness and meekness He first gives us a place in heaven, Christ our life, and then sets us down here to do that.

We have the revelation of God Himself in the Person of His Son. He dwells in us, and we in Him; and we know it, for He has given us of His Spirit. Our place before God is settled; Christ is our life. We have the knowledge of God, and power to walk in this world. And another thing, heavenly things are revealed to us through His Word, the things which belong to the place in which we are now citizens. "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

There we are to live and get the motive that characterizes us as Christians. If that were always so, we should be always really epistles of Christ-in our houses, our dress, in our everyday life, in all the things that are the expression of our hearts. Is Christ the motive in everything we do? If not, we leave Him for some vanity or other. What every Christian has to do is to commend himself "to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (v. 2), that if they judge him, it should be for consistency. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts." The glory of God is revealed in my heart, and I am thus to manifest it in the world, that they should see it in my words and ways; and in whatever gift I have; that all I say and do should give out the light of the knowledge of God in a world of pitch darkness. It has been revealed in our hearts to make it shine out in the darkness of this world. It is a blessed place, but a very distinct and definite one. If Christ is revealed, He has brought in the knowledge of God; all the glory of God, His holiness, His majesty, His love, has shined into our hearts, that we may give it out.

That is very simple, if it were all; but it is not all. It is God's way to put this in an earthen vessel (that is, our human bodies). The Apostle does not speak here of wickedness, but weakness. We have to get the flesh put down, usually the result of chastening. We know that, but the Apostle does not go on that ground here. It is not a question of sin or failure, but of the path of the Christian as such. The first element is, he has the whole glory of God revealed; but in this "earthen vessel, that the excellency of the power may be of God"-constant dependence. Great, excellent, and wonderful as the treasure is, He has put it in a place which to man's eye and mind and thought is unfit for it; as to power, I mean. Therefore, in your life, even when you are going on right, you get these two elements: all the glory of God revealed in your heart, but put purposely in an earthen vessel, because there is a great deal for us to learn as regards what poor, weak, wretched creatures we are.

Peter says, "I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death." Will you? said the Lord in effect; I will see. We all know what it was. You may say he had not the Holy Spirit. No, but the flesh is as treacherous now as it was before the Holy Spirit was given. Of course there is more power to keep it down. We may learn slowly what it is, but learn it we must. It comes out even when we are seeking to serve Christ honestly, as Peter was.

It is the thought of God to put the treasure in this vessel that it may learn itself what it is, and we must learn it. We may earnestly and honestly go and preach Christ, and heartily, but we sadly learn that confidence in self results in mistakes. It is lovely to see Moses going down and associating himself with the poor brick-makers; but he had not learned himself, and he killed an Egyptian, and then ran away.

I must keep watching the flesh for I know what it is; then I lean on a strength that is not mine, and wait for God's direction and guidance, for I know my confidence must be in Another, not in myself. By the discovery of my weakness, I know I have no power but in God.

Paul had a thorn in the flesh. He had been put down when he was converted, but he had to be kept down that he might know it was not the capacity of Paul, but that the power of Christ might rest upon him. God says, It is I working in you. Cannot I work through your weakness? Oh then, says Paul, I will keep it! "Most gladly... will I rather glory in my infirmities." Here he says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed," for we have God to look to. "Perplexed, but not in despair." I cannot see a way but for myself, but I have God, and He is a sure way. "Persecuted, but not forsaken," for God is with me. "Cast down, but not destroyed."

He lived in the consciousness that the Lord was always there, and that he needed Him. Even in truth and sincerity of heart we are apt to go on as if we did not need the Lord. If for one instant I have not Him with me, I am nothing. Where we are seeking to serve Christ, we have to learn our own lesson; but where there is not that dependence there will be failure. In small things or in great things we cannot do anything without Him, and we are unable to do good in the strength of our own thoughts. We are slow to learn it.

There are two remedies for this. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (v. 10). The Apostle applies it to himself and that goes very far, though it is not all; but if you applied the cross to every thought that arises in your heart, you would find how many thoughts the cross would crucify. The flesh would never put up a thought at all. What could a dead man put up?

Of course we have to be gentle and courteous as Christians; but the old man has been put to death, and I have to reckon myself dead. Here he is carrying it out every day. I fear there are many who do not so apply it to every thought and feeling and purpose—who do not so distrust the flesh and everything in mere human nature. If I let my body live, there is flesh. But he says, I bear "about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest" in my body. In order to manifest Christ always, I hold the flesh dead. That was his part in faith.

Then comes the second thing, God's part. "We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." However faithful he was, God had to help him. He puts you through circumstances where the flesh comes out, and then says, There now, see what the flesh is. Paul could say all this trial and exercise was for Christ's sake. With us very often it is for flesh's sake.

The fullness of the glory is ours. The glory has shone into our hearts; but He puts it in an earthen vessel, because our hearts have to learn what we are. No self-will can be allowed; no self-stirring, no flesh, no thought from the vanity of this world can be allowed, nothing that does not suit this treasure. Do you not allow thoughts to come into your mind and remain there, that do not suit the treasure of heaven? Things that do not take the form of gross evil, but a quantity of things that are not Christ? Take the day's conversation. Has there been no vanity, no idleness? Is your speech "always with grace, seasoned with salt"? If you take up a newspaper and spend a lot of time reading of the empty things of the world, do you then turn to read of Christ and His glory, and not find your heart dull? If you do not guard against this, you may be sure it will get duller and duller. It hinders the preciousness of Christ to you. You have lost power. You do not go and read your Bible and pray with the same freshness.

When I apply the cross of Christ, it stops the moving of my heart. The Lord puts me through circumstances that put me to the test. If death came and found me a dead man, what effect would it have? With the Apostle the flesh was kept down, and he was looking to God. He says, "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life"; but we trusted in God who raised the dead. Would their killing him prevent God's raising him? We can bless God for it. He puts down the flesh that needs putting down. "Death worketh in us, but life in you." Death was working in Paul, and nothing but life worked as regards others. Oh that it were so with us!

The practical effect of it is, "All things are for your sakes." When self is down, I begin to think the thoughts of God, and everything is for us. I see "All things are yours; whether life, or death or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Do you believe that "all things are for your sakes"? that all that happens in the world, no matter what the motives that govern men in it, everything is for your sakes? He makes everything work together for your good—every circumstance in your life. They may not always be pleasant, but we have not to be occupied with them in the same manner as the world is. God overrules all. He lets man go on, but makes "the wrath of man" to praise Him. Peter says in Acts 2, You by wicked hands crucified and slew Him, but it was by the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God."

We want only to have confidence that He has a purpose, and that purpose is to glorify His Son. Whatever is needed for that He will do. If my eyes are straight forward to glorify Him, everything goes right. If I go against His path, He will obstruct my way. If I am in His path, He helps me on, but I must be there with His strength. Paul says, "We faint not." I do not go on in my own strength. I

may be weary or weak, but it is God. I may be faint in my mind, but "when I am weak, then am I strong." "The inward man is renewed day by day." Dependence is renewed. You never get in the grace of today the strength for tomorrow. Every trouble gives some apprehension of what is to come. Never mind, he says, it is a "light affliction." The inward man is not touched, it is "renewed day by day"; and we get blessing by these very things.

I would ask you, Are you ready to take this place, willing to be under God's hand, cleaving to Him with purpose of heart, saying, "I want to get Christ, to win Him, and here I have one thing to do, to manifest Christ"? Are you willing to have your flesh put down? It is singleness of eye.

What Satan is at, is to get us to have, if it were ever so little, confidence in the flesh. Do you say, "Let the vessel be dealt with as He will, in whatever He sees needed, so that Christ may be manifested, whether by life or by death"? Is that the desire of your heart?

Truth in Books Not Merely in Books

Many years ago a young Christian spoke to an aged one about the great value of books -books of ministry on the Scriptures -in a way to place undue emphasis on the intellectual side. The other replied, "Young man, the Lord wants truth in boots, not merely in books." A salutary lesson for him and for us all!

Now we hasten to add that there is nothing wrong with reading the good sound ministry which has been handed down to us as a goodly heritage. Would to God that there were more reading of the precious truths that have been preserved for us by means of the printed page; it is sadly neglected in this our day. Such reading and meditation thereon are fast becoming lost arts, while the things of the world (some seemingly good) are read and enjoyed. We greatly fear that the reason many dear children of God do not grow in their souls is the sad neglect in their homes of reading the Word of God and such written ministry as is available.

The enemy of your soul will seek to hinder such reading and meditation by keeping you so occupied with other things that there is little time left; but sometimes it is necessary to set aside time for this most important exercise. We generally find time to eat our meals regardless of how busy we are; shall we be less diligent in seeing that our souls are fed? Perhaps Satan will whisper that you are too weary and cannot take it in, and so encourage spiritual sloth. In this modern age of rush none of us have as much leisure as our forebears, but generally speaking we can make some time for a spiritual meal if we desire. It may be that we have to choose between it and something else, but remember that the Lord approved Mary's choosing that good part of sitting at His feet and hearing His words.

There is also a danger of seeking new and modern writings on the Scriptures, instead of being satisfied with the good things that have been drawn for us from the deep wells by men of God of bygone years. This is dangerous for Our souls, for much of the so-called up-to-date written ministry is only a variation of the old with certain additions and alterations to tickle the ears and please the fancy of those who are always seeking for something "new." Every attempt to dress up the truth will introduce something that is foreign to it. The truth does not need dressing up, and the truth which was suitable for souls 100 years ago is just as applicable and precious today as it was then. In fact, the words needed by the saints at Corinth are needed today, and that without alteration. True, as some say, times have changed; but God and His Word have not changed, nor have the hearts and proclivities of men.

God does not duplicate; He had one Abraham, one Moses, one Samuel, one David, one Daniel, one Paul, one Peter, etc., etc. Each in his day served his own generation (Acts 13:36), and in so doing is by the will and wisdom of God still serving us. So in the early days of the revival of the truths of the heavenly calling of the Church, the Lord's coming (for and with His saints), the one body, and collateral truths, He used separated (separated from the world as is scarcely known today), God-fearing, spiritual men to unfold these precious things; and in His providence He has ordered that this ministry would be preserved by printing for us today.

There will no more be a repetition of C. H. Mackintosh, J. G. Bellett, G. V. Wigram, J. N. Darby, Wm. Kelly, Charles Stanley, et al, than there will be a duplication of those who served at other times.

If there is a hankering with us for "some new thing," as with the Athenians, we need to beware lest we be like the Israelites who wearied of the plain manna as God gave it; they finally loathed it, and then set about to change it by beating it in mortars, baking it in pans, etc. (Numb. 11:4-8). Whenever the simple truth of God has lost its pleasantness to our taste, we are sick spiritually, and the sooner we get before God in self-examination and self-judgment of those things that have perverted our appetite, the better; for if we do not judge ourselves in respect of them, we shall drift farther and farther, and who knows what the end will be?

At this point we might add a few words about the mischievous teaching that the saints of God should read nothing but the Bible. This almost without exception leads its followers into absurdities and grave errors. This theory is a denial that the Lord has given gifts to the Church for its profit, and is also a refusal of such gifts. It is basically pride which makes one feel competent of himself to know all things; there is no man who is in himself a fully and perfectly balanced man. If we set at naught the gifts, we shall develop strange thoughts and ideas, and with no one to correct us we shall become more and more eccentric. Not that these gifts mentioned are absolute authority, not that they were inspired, but we should remember that none of us is self-sufficient, and we would do well to follow the example of the Bereans (Acts 17:11) who in their nobility of character "received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Let us not forget that those recognized as gifts in ministry have been given as such by Him who is "head over all things to the church," and that the written ministry as well as the oral ministry is valuable to the Church. Read Heb. 13:7-9.

Before we close, however, let us return to the subject of our first paragraph. The words of that aged servant of the Lord are valuable and important; mere knowledge of the truth in our heads is not sufficient, precious as that is in its place. The Lord wants us to get the truth down into our hearts, which means that we enjoy it and appropriate it to ourselves. He never intended that the truth should be something to exercise the intellect only, but that it should guide us in the right ways of the Lord. It should also reach us through our consciences.

If then the truth of God is loved in the heart, and allowed to search the conscience in the fear of God, we shall find that it will be in the boots too; that is, we shall then be found walking in it. Another servant of the Lord has said, "We have no truth that we do not walk in"; it is not really our own unless it has that power over us that directs our ways. Another has said, "Nothing but the truth can hold the truth." So if I am not living and walking in the good of the truth, I shall not be able to hold it. How many there are who have lost what they once had even of the knowledge of the truth, through failure to walk in that which they had in their heads. May the Lord keep us close to Himself, with our consciences alive and healthy, and our hearts full of warmth toward Him; then we shall desire to know more of the truth that we may walk in the good of it to His glory.

Unbelief

Unbelief creates or magnifies difficulties, and then sets us about removing them by our own bustling and fruitless activities, which in reality do but raise a dust around us, which prevents our seeing God's salvation.

When unbelief is driven from the scene, then God can enter; and, in order to get a proper view of His actings, we must stand still.

Waiting

"The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him" (Lam. 3:25). Waiting. This is a compound virtue. It is made up of the two Christian graces, faith and patience. When a man waits, it implies first of all, belief in the reality of the object of his expectation. He believes it to have a real existence. But it implies also uncertainty as to the time of the fulfillment of its hopes. No child of God can be ignorant of this twin Christian grace. Every redeemed soul in yonder heaven knows of it; for it is expressly said that, from Abel downward, it is "through faith and patience" they are now inheriting "the promises" (Heb. 6:12).

Walk Circumspectly

While we have courage and energy, yet, as in an evil day, God says, "Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." Christians need not make trials for themselves by want of circumspection. If you are not careful and vigilant, be sure the devil is; and he never forgets to watch for an opportunity of injuring.

Walking With God

As one quickened by Christ, the question is, Am I walking worthy of Himself? Judgment is to be exercised by me as one walking with God in the light; taking my place in God's presence, not as a stranger but as a son; all the thoughts of my heart meeting His approval. Being, as I am, in the wilderness, shut in between the cross and the coming glory, I have got to bring everything into the light and judge it. I believe that nothings shows more what measure of vigor and power of spiritual life we have, than the way we bring out into the light, to be judged, not that which may appear outside, but all the hidden springs within, laying bare our thoughts and motives.

How often in an action that man might praise, there has been a thought, a motive, not worthy of Christ in the light. If all coming out there be judged by us, we can be working together with God, whose purpose with our souls is to form us unto Christ. How can there be joy if souls merely rest in the work of Christ, without entering into the thought of whether they are walking worthy of the place which that work has put them into? Suppose I lay down the reins. What would be the result? How much passes in one's soul that is not worthy, that is not in harmony and keeping with the death of Christ; am I to allow it? Impossible that God can; and if I don't judge it, God will. Ah! we who know this to be our place, know how happy and blessed a place it is-a place where we have not of necessity to come under the discipline of God's hand, but where we may be abiding in the light, having power to judge ourselves and to pass sentence against all in us that is not worthy of Christ, as vessels to be kept clean in the light that makes manifest every spot.

The Way of Salvation From Evil

The true way of non-association with evil is to be occupied with the Lord; in such occupation, sin which is still in you lies a dead letter, and other things are in abeyance. There is nothing that "deadifies" more than the habit of not minding. A person, for example, is seeking association with you. He calls, but you are occupied; he calls again, and you are occupied; he repeats his call, still you are occupied. He knows you prefer being occupied, to him, and he is mortified-the energy which first marked him is broken. Thus it is with the flesh. To be spiritually minded is life and peace; minding the things of the Spirit, being occupied with them, becomes a practical mortification-a "deadifying" process to the flesh. This I believe is the power of a true personal holiness- separation unto God being the greatest power in separation from evil.

What We Have, Who Received Christ

By faith we receive Christ (John 1:14), receiving Him we receive from Him the right to become the sons of God; we receive forgiveness of sins, abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness. We receive eternal life. Christian action follows on this reception of Christ. The teaching of the Holy Spirit unfolds to us what we have received in having received Christ. It is well to keep this principle constantly before the soul; it is not that which we renounce, any more than that which we do, which makes us Christians, but that which we receive. And this principle runs through the Christian life; it is a life which has its affections, sensibilities, energies and activities. Our Christian life is not a system of negation any more than is our natural life. This marks it forcibly from the common notion of religion. It is said, "Cease to do evil"; it is added, "Learn to do well." "Abhor that which is evil"; "Cleave to that which is good." "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying."

We Know - Language of Faith

Read 2 Cor. 5:1-15

It is a matter of deepest moment for all of us to be quite sure as to the future. No doubt some will say, It is impossible; no one can be sure as to the future. You will be more right if you say, No one can be sure of the present. You do not know what tomorrow will bring forth; but, thank God, what is unseen and eternal is defined for us with the utmost clearness. The simplest believer knows without a shadow of a doubt.

It is charming how this chapter opens-"We know." What a comfort in a day of doubt, and of infidelity on all sides! What does the Christian know? That if he passes from this scene, he goes to be with the Lord. My reader, do you know this?

In this chapter two most solemn things are spoken of-death and judgment-yet the Apostle can say, "We know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." This is a beautiful possession- the privilege of the veriest babe in Christ-"We know," not "We hope. "

This is the present portion of the believer; it is Christian knowledge, the common property of every child of God, not the possession of some exclusive class. It is that which Christ has secured by His death, bought with His blood, and which He gives to every one of His own.

On the other hand, what is the future of the unconverted man? It is a leap in the dark. What a fool a man must be so to leap when he can get light! Look at the thief on the cross. He could say, I know I am going to be with Christ; He told me Himself-"Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

Do you know that, reader? Do not say people cannot know it; be honest, and say, I do not. The world says, You may hope; how are you to know? The Lord tells you in His Word. Would it be presumption to believe Christ? No; presumption lies with the one who says he cannot know, when God's Word says, "Ye may know."

I can look into eternity and say, All is perfectly clear before me. You get the basis and ground on which this knowledge rests in the end of this chapter; it is what Christ has done on the cross. He was made sin-He who knew no sin-that sinners, believing in Him, might be forever with Him without their sins

What Is the Camp? Part 1

Heb. 13:12, 13

In this last chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, the Spirit of God, speaking of the fact that "the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp," goes on to say, "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify [set apart] the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." vv. 11-13.

Many are at a loss to know what is referred to by the term "camp," yet it is very important to understand it, because those who love the Lord Jesus Christ are exhorted to go forth from it unto Him.

In order to learn what is meant then (as is our duty to do) by this expression, we should first of all find out to whom the epistle is primarily and especially addressed, and with God's blessing it will soon be made plain.

The epistle to the Hebrews was written to professedly converted Jews who had been born and trained up under the law given by God to Israel at Mount Sinai when in camp in the wilderness. Then and there a system of worship was ordained of God for this nation in the flesh, which was perfect in its place, but which did not suppose or require that the worshipers should be born again, and under which system they as a nation utterly failed.

Next we must get clear as to what the Spirit of God called "the camp," at the time the Apostle wrote the above exhortation. The ninth chapter tells us that there were ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary, consisting of a tabernacle made with men's hands, and pitched on earth, which was their place of worship. They also had an ordained priesthood-men of a certain family set apart to come between the worshipers and God, of whom Aaron was the high priest. And this man was the minister of this sanctuary, without whom the worshipers could not worship..

This high priest offered up an atonement for these people's sins once every year, besides the other sacrifices that were offered up continually; and as already noticed, these worshipers were not required to be a converted people (though some of them were so), but were a company of believers and unbelievers mingled together, all of them on the ground of law-keeping for righteousness.

Now this system embraced as worshipers all the nation of Israel then in camp. At the time the Apostle wrote, this nation had become settled in the land, and their worship centered in the temple at Jerusalem. The Spirit of God calls this "the camp," out of which the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," were to go forth.

I learn then that Judaism, or this system of worship in the flesh, was in Paul's day "the camp." And, dear Christian reader, is it not clear at a glance that any system of worship of a Jewish nature and character, and in consequence a system that the flesh and sight-the world in fact-can more or less

join in, is the camp in our day? We know, as revealed by the Son of God Himself, that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"-a thing impossible for the flesh to do. It requires men to be born of the Spirit and sealed with the Spirit. In John 4:21 our Lord says, "Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." The time had come when places of worship on earth-mountains, and temples made with hands-should be done away with. Men in the flesh had been thoroughly tested and proved to be utterly incapable of obeying God's law, or worshiping Him either; and now a new order of things comes in: men born of the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, worshiping in spirit and in truth, not in a temple or tabernacle on earth, but in the holiest, that is, heaven itself- the only worshiping place now-having boldness to enter there by the blood of Jesus.

Therefore, if any system of worship exists now which has a worldly sanctuary-a temple made with hands, with an ordained priesthood or class of men set apart to take a special place between the worshipers and God, without whom they cannot worship, where the worshipers are a mixture of converted and unconverted people under law, that is, must be indeed-"the camp." It is Judaism in its nature and character as a system of worship, though there may be some real Christians in it, and the gospel be still preached more or less faithfully by some in it, too.

It is the Holy Spirit-it is God-speaking, who says through the Apostle to any of His dear children who are in any kind of system such as this, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him [Christ] without the camp, bearing His reproach."

"But," say some, "why not stay inside and do the good you can where you are?" Because, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Sam. 15:22. Because God will not have Christianity and Judaism mixed up together-the new wine in the old bottles. Because God will not have the world and the Church unequally yoked together (2 Cor. 6). Because Jesus Christ has come a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands. He has been cast out by worshipers in the flesh (Jewish worshipers), and suffered outside the gate on Calvary, proving that worship in the flesh is not a real thing; for if they had loved God, they would have revered His Son. Though these worshipers in the flesh could point out in the Scriptures where Christ was to be born, to the wise men of the east, not one foot did they go to find Him, but were troubled and distressed at the very thought of His being come.

Now, risen from the dead, He has entered into the holy place made without hands, even into heaven itself, not with the blood of bulls and goats, "but by His own blood," "having obtained [not redemption for a year only, but] eternal redemption for us." Heb. 9:12. So now the Man in the glory, the God-man, is our minister-"A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." (Heb. 8:1, 2; 9:11, 12, 24.)

What Is the Camp? Part 2

Though it is true that God at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, He has more highly honored us in these last days; He has spoken unto us by His Son (Heb. 1:1, 2). Here the Spirit of God puts God's Son above and before all other prophets.

Again, though true that Moses was the Apostle (and was faithful in all his house as a servant), and Aaron was God's called and chosen high priest for this nation of worshipers in the flesh - Israel-we Christians are to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, thus exalting Christ above and before Moses and Aaron (Heb. 1:1, 2; 3:1-6). Under the law, it was commanded and instituted by God Himself that sacrifices of bulls and goats should be offered-a shadow of better things to come. But now, Christ has offered Himself, and has risen and gone in and presented His own blood to God for us, having thus by one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified (Chap. 10). Thus Christ's sacrifice is put above, and in the place of, all these other sacrifices which could never take away sins. The substance has come and taken the place of the shadows.

Furthermore, though perfectly true that God told Moses to make the tabernacle, and Solomon the temple, for a place of worship on earth under the law, now He has opened heaven to us, and we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; heaven itself taking the place of the tabernacle, and temple at Jerusalem, as the Christian's worshiping place, which we enter by faith and in spirit (Heb. 8:1, 2; 9:24).

Then though God made a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, giving them the law-a covenant of works-they failed under it; and the Christian is not under law, but under grace, Christ having delivered us from the law and its curse, being made a curse for us, and "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." (Gal. 2:19; Heb. 8:9-13.)

Then, it was true that unconverted as well as converted were in the congregation of worshipers under the law; now, He who is a Spirit, and must have worship in spirit and in truth, is seeking such to worship Him. Who can do so? Those, and those only who, converted and sealed by the Spirit of God, have the power and heart for it. In short, Christ and Christianity have taken the place of, and are a direct contrast to, the law and Judaism; and God will not allow us to mix the two, or rather, I should have said, try to do so.

So the word is, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

Now my reader must take notice that this is not a question of salvation-it is not that souls inside the camp are not saved-indeed, it is the saved ones inside that are called upon to go outside (and no doubt many souls are being saved where the gospel is truly preached inside); but it is a question of obedience, and of worshiping God according to the principles of Christianity- surely a very important thing in the eyes of those who love the Lord Jesus.

When the epistle to the Hebrews was written, there were many thousands of Jews that believed, and they were all zealous of the law, as the Apostle James witnessed. See Acts 11:21. If we compare dates, we shall find that God in longsuffering goodness and mercy allowed the believing Jews to remain in "the camp" for perhaps thirty years after Pentecost. And so Christianity and Judaism were going on together for some years. See Acts 2:46, 47; 21:20-25. But God had not told them to leave it as yet. However, after Paul had gone to Jerusalem and, persuaded by James, had gone to the temple worship again to please the many thousands of Jews that believe, nearly losing his life at the hands of the unbelieving portion of Jewish worshippers, he was sent a prisoner to Rome, and judging from the dates, from there probably wrote this very epistle. The Spirit of God used the Apostle to call on the Christians in Judaism-Apostle James and all-to separate from the camp altogether, the time having come when God would no longer allow the two to go on, or appear to go on, together.

It was very trying for one brought up as a Jew in Paul's' day to obey this call, and so it is to us now in these days. But if we love Him who gave Himself for us, the way to show our love to Him is to obey His commandments and His words (see John 14:21, 23). And if there is reproach promised us on obedience, let us not forget that it is His reproach. He has Himself endured far worse than any of us ever did or ever will have to endure; and His love and His power are with us and for us, to carry us through-yes, even to enable us to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for His sake.

But we are to "go forth unto Him without the camp." Where, outside the camp, shall I find Him, and in what special way is He to be found there? Christian brother or sister, there is a special place outside the camp where the Lord vouchsafes to be, and to manifest Himself in a very special and peculiar manner to faith; it is "where two or three are gathered together unto [Greek] MY name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. 18:20. The place then is where two or three, or twenty or thirty, or two or three hundred, gather together unto His name; and the special way and manner He vouchsafes to manifest Himself there to faith is not to be described in words. It is to be felt and enjoyed by those who believe and obey His words-His actual, but not of course bodily, presence in the midst. O that all His dear people believed it!

I would add that this does not do away with ministry-divinely appointed ministry-in the Church of God. There is a ministry; there are gifts given unto men; there are evangelists, pastors, and teachers "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of [not a sect, but] the body of Christ." Eph. 4:11, 12. But these gifts are not given to lead Christians in worship. They are as the members of one's own natural body, for the use of the whole body; but the Head alone is He to whom all are to look, to lead and guide, especially in worship. And it is Christ who is the Head of His body, the Church, of which all true Christians are members (1 Cor. 12:12). He really does lead by His Spirit where He is owned as present and looked to as in the midst, and given His proper place-the place that only He has a right to, or is qualified to fill.

He who places the members of the body in it as it pleases Him, uses evangelists, pastors, and teachers, when and where He chooses to do so, they looking to Him for guidance where to go, and where and how long to remain, to whom they are alone responsible for the use of their gift or gifts.

But in worship we come together not to hear a gospel address, not to be taught by a teacher, not to be exhorted by a pastor, but to give, as led of the Lord in the midst by His Spirit, praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to our God and Father, or it may be to the Lord Jesus Himself—something that requires no special gift in anyone, but something which every true Christian walking with God is capacitated to give, and which God alone is worthy to receive; that is, worship.

It could be that one, two, or three simple but true-hearted souls might each in turn be led in plain and unadorned words to be the mouthpiece of all the Christians present. They will do so, not because more fitted or more gifted or because called upon by any one to do so, but simply because led by His Spirit. We are to look to and own as our Head, our High Priest, our minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him our songs and words of praise ascend as acceptable unto God.

And this system of spiritual worship will never be done away with. It has begun on earth, and as hindered by these bodies of humiliation, it is never what it should be or will be. When we get the redemption of our bodies—when no longer "through a glass darkly, but then face to face," knowing as we are known; when no longer scattered and divided and mixed up with the world, as many are, in worship, etc.; when all Christ's blood-bought ones are gathered around Himself in glory—then shall the worship begun on earth continue on in glory forever, and be fully what it ought to be. J.B.D.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.... For who hath despised the day of small things?"

Zech. 4:6, 10

What Seek Ye?

Luke 12:36: "And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately."

Fellow-Christian, are you looking for the Lord to come back? Is there a day of your life that passes without your thinking, Perhaps this is the day? I was in a home the other day and saw on the wall a motto: "Perhaps today!" Are you looking for Him? He wants you to. He has promised to come back. Do you believe He is coming?

Let me give a little illustration. About 25 years ago a brother and his wife called at a Christian home. They knocked. They could hear the loud booming of the radio inside the house giving forth anything but what would please the ear of heaven. The wife came to the door, looked through the glass, saw who it was, and called to her husband: "Turn it off; it's the ---s." The thing was so loud that he could not hear what she said, and she had to shout again: "Turn it off; it's the s." Finally, all was silent, the door opened, and they received a welcome. They were ushered into a little room where they hung their wraps. They noticed on the wall in front of them a picture of a prominent movie actress. That is a long time ago now, but I want to tell you those conditions told a story.

"The mills of God grind slowly,
But they grind exceeding small.
With patience He sits watching,
As He grindeth one and all."

The young lady who had the movie actress' picture on her wall long years ago, married and had her little family, but now she has a broken home. The wife who was so fearful about the ---s standing at the door was called home from this scene, a comparatively young woman. Ah, beloved, they were not ready for a visit.

What about the Lord's coming? Oh, to be like unto men that wait for their Lord, that when He comes and knocks, they may open to Him immediately. Beloved, if you knew positively that the Lord was coming this week, would you make some radical changes in your home, in your relationships, in your associations? Is it not a legitimate question to ask in view of this scripture? I believe it is.

It is not only waiting. Luke 12:37: Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." Did He mean it? indeed He did. Some day, beloved Christian, dear child of God, you and I are going to be ushered into that bright glory above. We are going to be with and like our Lord, and up there we are going to find Him the same faithful Servant that He has been all down through the years. When He was here as a man below, He went about in faithful service from day to day. He healed the sick; He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf,

raised the dead; His hands spread kindness and mercy wherever He went. Lovely, gracious words proceeded out of His mouth. He was the perfect Servant.

Then the time came when He left this world. He led the disciples out as far as the Mount of Olives, and while He spoke with them, He was parted from them. The cloud received Him out of their sight. An angel said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." He is coming back, but in the meantime, what is He doing up there? He is the Servant. You and I could not get through a day of our lives down here but for His advocacy and priesthood up there for us. He is the Servant up there, girded for service. Day by day He washes our feet. Day by day He cleanses our ways, and in time of need there comes mercy in abundance from His presence to meet us in our weakness. Oh, He is a faithful Servant.

Is that all? Oh, no. By-and-by He is going to give the shout in the air. He is going to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; and He is going to say, Now, sit down. He girds Himself-blessed, heavenly Man-Man out of heaven-He girds Himself, makes us to sit down to meat, and comes forth and serves us. Oh, yes, He is going to serve us by-and-by. Ah, beloved, it is not enough to wait. We want to watch, too, and then the meeting in the air. Then that banquet in the glory when the Lord Himself will again serve us.

In Luke 12:36, they are waiting; in Luke 12:37, they are watching. Now we go to the 41st verse: "Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" Verse 42: "And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?" Verse 43: "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." Waiting, watching, now, doing, but notice the order. If you and I are going to serve Christ acceptably, if there is going to be the right savor in that service, it will proceed from hearts that have been quickened by the hope of His return and by the expectancy of it. Blessed are those servants that shall be found so doing. Are you seeking to help the members of the body of Christ? Is that Christian you are associated with a better Christian because you are with him? That Christian who works in the same office with you, who lives in the same house with you, who sits beside you in school; that neighbor across the fence, is it easier for him to live for Christ because you have tried to drop a word in season? Are you "so doing"? If you are, it is going to have a blessed reward.

Remember, there is not the least thing that you ever do for Christ that is going to be lost sight of in that coming day. If I come to your house and you give me a cup of cold water, it is not much; it did not cost you much; but if you give it to me in the name of a disciple, you will find it on the books up there by-and-by, and you will get a reward for it. Life is not made up of the great, gigantic feats we perform. No. Its web and woof are the daily acts and thoughts and deeds of our lives. It's the little things-a word here and a deed there-that we have done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that mount up to our account in His glory in that coming day. Blessed are those servants whom He shall find so doing.

Now there is a warning here. There is a servant here who says in his heart-and get this point- says in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming." He does not put a trumpet to his lips and say, I do not believe the Lord is coming; I think it will be a million years yet. We do not do that, but down in the secret of the heart, does the thought lurk, No, I do not think the Lord is coming now?-no, not until I

accomplish my aims in life?-I do not think I have to worry about that in my day? You have not told your brother that, nor your sister. No, you have not made a confidant of anybody, but down in the heart is there the thought, "My lord delayeth his coming"? Notice, he does not say the Lord is not coming. He says, "My lord delayeth his coming." He is not going to be here very soon.

What is the effect? Our Lord tells us the effect. He begins to "beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken"-a twofold result of denying in our heart's affections the nearness of Christ's return. We begin to be careless as to our relationship with our dear brethren. We neglect them. We mistreat them. We perhaps abuse them, and then what is the next step? Eating and drinking with the drunken- worldliness. Now I am quite aware that in its full application this scripture refers to the false servant. This is the one who is not a child of God at all, but the principle is the same for the children of God. The postponement of the Lord's coming into the far distance is going to result in coldness in your heart and mine. The man who has the hope of the Lord's coming daily before him is going to purify himself. That blessed hope is going to have its cleansing, purging effect in his life.

Now we will go on down further in the chapter to the 49th verse: "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" Verse 50: "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" I will tell you an interesting thing about that 50th verse. Some 20 or 25 years ago, Mr. M-and I made a Scripture Text Index of Mr. Darby's "Synopsis of the Books of the Bible." That way we found out every place in the "Synopsis" where any verse is referred to, and we were rather astonished to find the 50th verse of Luke 12 is referred to more often than any other verse in the Bible in those five volumes of the "Synopsis." "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." What does that tell us? That ought to touch our affections. What did Christ mean? In substance He said, "Oh, I cannot tell you all that is in My heart until that work on the cross is finished. I cannot be to you what I want to be to you until that sin question is taken out of the way. I cannot unlock the floodgates of My affection and purposes and counsels for you until that work on the cross is accomplished." That is the baptism that was ahead of Him. Yes, He was straitened in His affections. He longed to have it over with so that He could come out with both hands full and bless us with blessings far beyond the fondest dream of man. Yes, that is what lay ahead of Him. That was the purpose for which He came into this world.

And now another thought. Luke 12:51: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division." Is not that startling? Stop and weigh it. The Lord Jesus Christ came down here, into your life and mind, to give division. Some people shudder at the thought of division. Some shrink, but our Lord said He came to bring division; and, beloved, if you are going to live for Christ in this world, it is going to mean division. Indeed it is. Our brother was calling attention in the readings yesterday to the fact that God hates mixtures. "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass." "Thou shalt not wear a garment of... woolen and linen." God detests mixtures. He wants loyalty to Himself, and loyalty to Christ brings divisions in this world.

Our Lord Jesus Christ demands pre-eminence in your life and mine, beloved. Is He not worthy? Shall we supplant Him in our heart's affections with any relationship in life, however dear? Oh, you may say, It would break my mother's heart. Far rather break your mother's heart than do violence to the affections of Christ. He demands first place.

I remember a brother whose wife's mother told me that if he left such-and-such religious organization, it would kill her. Well, she kept the pressure on as long as she could. Finally, that dear brother counted the cost and stepped out to Christ alone. He said, The Lord Jesus shall come first. He saw no man save Jesus only. God blessed him for that act, and today that man is an acknowledged and esteemed servant of Christ. Yes, beloved, do not be afraid of making a decision for Christ. Do not think you are going to lose that sweetheart because you decided for Christ. If you make the decision for Christ and lose that sweetheart, the day is coming when you are going to bless God for the loss. You are going to find out you were protected by the Spirit of God, and that it would have brought sorrow into your life. Ah, God has the very best for us, beloved. He wants to give us out of the fullness of His heart.

Our time is up, but I do not want to close this little address without a word to the unsaved. Luke 12:58: "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison." Verse 59: "I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite."

I shall not touch on the dispensational bearing of that verse, its connection with the Jewish nation, but here is a principle. Christ is offered here today. You know the gospel: You know the way to heaven is through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may be just a child, but you have never come out and confessed that name. Jesus has been offered in all these meetings. I urge upon you to accept that offer, for the time may be right at hand when you Will nevermore have the opportunity-when the judge will deliver you over, and you will not depart thence until you have paid the last mite. That cannot be done in an eternity.

The other day I spoke at a funeral, and down in the audience sat a young man and his wife and two children. I tried to speak faithfully the gospel. They paid good attention. That night, both of them were corpses in the same funeral home. They were young. Do not count on youth! Get right with God at any cost; and Christian, dear Christian, let us get things right. He is coming. Let us be ready to open to Him immediately. If there are things in our lives that need clearing up, let us get it done; He is coming soon. We can read the signs of the times. We know He is at the very doors. May we wake up. The Lord is coming back again.

This morning a sister handed me this piece of paper-said her husband asked her to hand it to me. I received it as though the Lord Himself had put it in my hands, and lifted up my heart to Him and thanked Him for it right there. In closing I am going to read it. This is our encouragement as we enter this new year:

"The same yesterday, and today, and forever"- this is Jesus, is it not?

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net